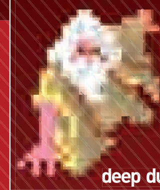
OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

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AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATARI | ... | COIN-OP | MOBILE



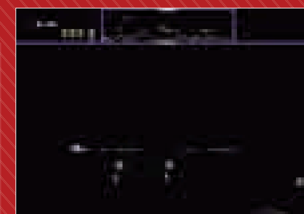
ED LOGG

From blasting Asteroids to deep dungeons - a legend speaks

THE DEFINITIVE...

DEFENDER

THRUSTING INTO DEEP SPACE AND BACK WITH EUGENE JARVIS' EPIC BLASTER



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEW

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

THE GHOULISH SECRETS BEHIND CAPCOM'S CLASSIC FRANCHISE

SAMURAI WARRIOR

C64 KARMA

HOW A SAMURAI RABBIT LEAPT FROM A CULT COMIC BOOK TO THE C64

HARRY'S BACK!

PITFALL II

WHIPPING UP A STORM WITH ACTIVISION'S AMAZING SEQUEL

SPECTRUM LEGENDS

CHRIS STAMPER

WITH THE OLIVER TWINS, JON RITMAN AND DAVID JONES ON WHY THE SPECTRUM RULED

RETROINSPECTION

ORIC-1

HOW THE TANGERINE DREAM BECAME A NIGHTMARE

BARGAIN HUNT

EVERY GAMES MACHINE LISTED

WANT TO START COLLECTING VINTAGE HARDWARE? CHECK OUT OUR COMPLETE LISTING

Code Masters

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO

CODEMASTERS
THE DARLING BROTHERS ON GOING FROM BUDGET TO BIG TIME

DYNAMITE HEADDY
RETRO GAMER LOSES ITS HEAD OVER TREASURE'S SUPERB PLATFORMER

THE DIVIDE
WHY YOU MUST PLAY THIS UNHEARD OF PSONE GAME

OPERATION WOLF
MORE RETRO REVIVAL LOVING WITH TAITO'S CLASSIC BLASTER

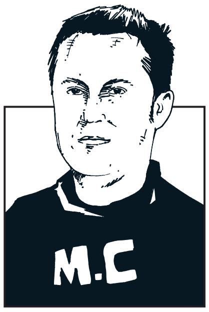
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THE RETROBATES

HARDEST VIDEOGAME CHARACTER



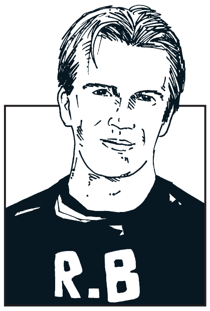
MARTYN CARROLL

Heihachi from the *Tekken* series takes some beating. Despite being about 102-years-old he can still slap his sons about. And he's got hair shaped like devil horns.
Expertise: Two-bit games on 8-bit machines
Currently playing: *Monkey Island 2*
Favourite game of all time: *Jet Set Willy*



ASHLEY DAY

Kirby may look like a cute, pink blob but turn him into a brick in *Super Smash Bros* and he can take on anyone as he plummets directly onto their heads.
Expertise: Destroying John on *Starfox Command*
Currently playing: *Dreamfall: The Longest Journey*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



RICHARD BURTON

Flynn Taggart – the *Doom* guy. Whether he's swinging a chainsaw or mashing monsters with his hands in berserk mode, he'll slaughter anything in his path without a second thought.
Expertise: Spectrum and Amstrad games
Currently playing: *Kerplunk*
Favourite game of all time: *Manic Miner*



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Barry Burton, of course. It's all in the beard. Tough men, real men, all have beards (just look at this page). More characters need beards; in fact, there should be a game starring detached beards.
Expertise: Japanese games
Currently playing: At being a writer
Favourite game of all time: *Cave Story*



PAUL DRURY

The blank square, hero of *Adventure* on the Atari VCS, for braving danger as naked as the day he was drawn. Ditto for the General in *Custer's Revenge*. But with Viagra.
Expertise: Getting programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing: *Lunar Rescue*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



DAVID CROOKES

Paperboy! He must have arms like an ox flinging those papers in letterboxes, gardens and people's faces. His perpetual paper round meant he had great mental strength too. What a guy!
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, *Broken Sword*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Paperboy*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*



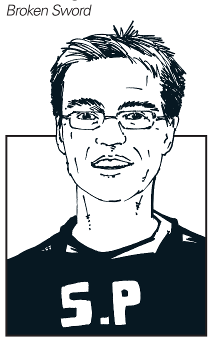
DARRAN JONES

Hugo from *Street Fighter III: Third Strike*. He's an absolute beast of a man and can kill people with just his arse. Just be sure to dodge his Gigas Breaker…
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer
Currently playing: *Texas Hold-'Em*
Favourite game of all time: *Robotron: 2084*



CRAIG GRANNELL

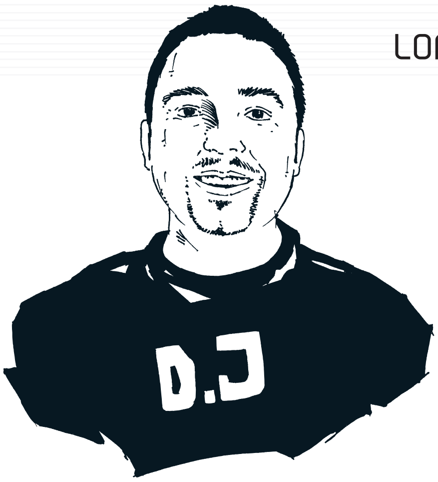
If it was a toss-up between Solid Snake, Duke Nukem and Samus, I'd have to plump for... Rockford. I mean, the guy eats diamonds for a living.
Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers
Currently playing: Juggle the deadlines
Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*



SIMON PHILLIPS

The Vindicator, from the little known title *The Vindicator*, he was pretty damn tough and he could fly planes. I'm yet to master either talent.
Expertise: Juggling babies and work
Currently playing: Daddy
Favourite game of all time: *Head Over Heels*

LOADING...



Last month saw a number of changes to Retro Gamer and if you quickly flick through the magazine, you'll see that a few more alterations have been made. Back with me? Good. Let's carry on then.

Here at Retro Gamer we're dedicated to you and we try to take onboard the feedback that you're good enough to give us each month. The issue you're holding in your hands is the result of all the thoughts that have reached us via the forum, email and letter, meaning we're confident it's going to be to your liking.

The A-Z Of The Eighties is on hiatus, the length of features is increasing and we've tried to crammed more content into this issue than ever before. We're aware that Retro Gamer has a diverse audience, and in an effort to ensure that there's something for everyone we've been working to deliver an equal share of retro goodness for everyone that reads the mag.

For fans of the 8-bit days there's a discussion of the Spectrum (Page 22) and a lookback at Codemasters (Page 60). Arcade and console fans, on the other hand, have features on *Ghosts 'N Goblins* (Page 34), the definitive guide to *Defender* (Page 52) and an interview with Ed Logg, creator of arcade hits *Asteroids*, *Centipede* and *Gauntlet*.

Retro Gamer is packed with more content then ever before. Let the good times roll and, as always, enjoy the magazine.







CONTENTS

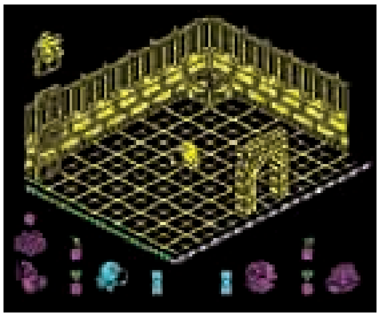
THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

INSIDE

At-a-glance retro sections…







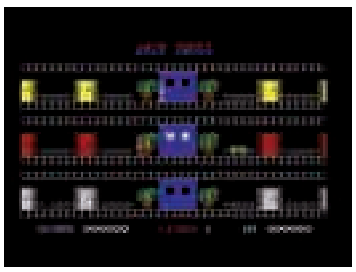


ESSENTIALS

RETROINSPECTION – **ORIC-1**



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p111



WHY YOU MUST PLAY...



CODEMASTERS

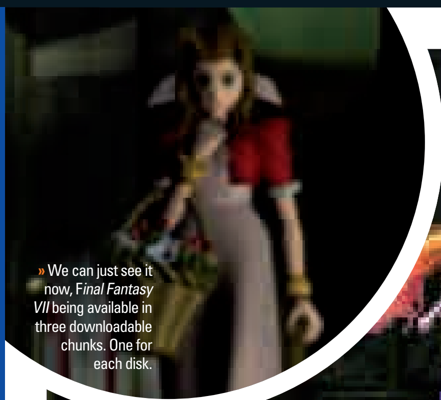


DESERT ISLAND DISKS

RETRO SCENE

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…



» We can just see it now, *Final Fantasy VII* being available in three downloadable chunks. One for each disk.



» Just imagine what these beasties would look like in high-definition

KONAMI ANNOUNCES CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT FOR XBOX LIVE ARCADE

RISE FROM YOUR GRAVE

Now this has the potential to be incredible news. According to a recent report in Electronic Gaming Monthly, Konami's excellent *Castlevania: Symphony Of The Night* is heading to Microsoft's Xbox Live Arcade service.

Despite originally appearing on the PlayStation, it would appear that it will be Microsoft and not Sony who will be benefiting from what is seen by many as one of the greatest *Castlevania* games ever created, although it is said to be in no way exclusive to Xbox Live Arcade (ie the expected PSP version and a Wii outing are still a distinct possibility).

While the news will no doubt have *Castlevania* fans weeping for joy, it does pose a number of interesting questions for the future of both Xbox Live Arcade and other downloadable game services that are expected for the Wii, PSP and PlayStation 3.

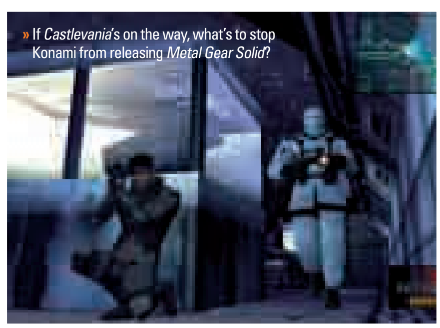
The most notable is that whatever machine a game first appeared on would no longer have any relevance unless of course it was originally a first-party game or a game based on an unusable IP (*Donkey Kong 64* would be a definite no-no for Xbox Live Arcade as the IP belongs to Nintendo).

Another point to consider is that all previous Xbox Live Arcade games had a cap of 65MEG so that they could be transferred onto memory cards, so either Konami is creating some amazing compression techniques – *Symphony* currently weighs in at around 484MEG – or Microsoft is completely rethinking its capping structure (good news for those still yearning for Dreamcast titles like *Chu Chu Rocket* and *Daytona*).

It also means that we could well see titles such as *Final Fantasy VII*, *Metal Gear Solid* and *Resident Evil*, which is bound to upset Sony who will no doubt want to push the AAA titles for its recently announced PSP download service. Konami has not revealed what changes it will be making (if any) to its classic adventure game and is remaining tight-lipped about potential achievements, but we do know that it's due to appear in the first quarter of 2007.

Before you start circling your 2007 calendars, spare a thought for what this news could mean to independent companies. Will titles such as *Marble Blast Ultra*, *Cloning Clyde* and *Heartwood Spades* be as successful when you can choose bigger, well-known titles from the larger publishers? Microsoft has always been keen to push its Arcade service as a way for smaller publishers to benefit from the Xbox 360, but this recent news could well undo those claims.

Ultimately, no matter how the future of Xbox Live Arcade is going to affect publishers and developers, it's the gamers who are going to be the real winners. Let's just hope that similar announcements start appearing for Nintendo's Wii and the PSP. After all, *Symphony Of The Night* isn't due to appear on the 360 until early 2007, plenty of time for both Nintendo and Sony to counteract Microsoft's plans for downloadable domination.



» If *Castlevania*'s on the way, what's to stop Konami from releasing *Metal Gear Solid*?

HERO OF THE MONTH

TIKI THE KIWI

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the star of *The New Zealand Story*

First appearance: *The New Zealand Story*

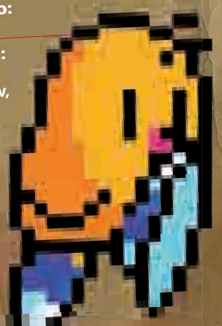
Distinguishing features: Bright yellow

Weapon of choice: Bow and arrow

Most likely to: Appear in a DS remake

Least likely to: Fly

Unusual fact: Kiwi's aren't actually yellow, their stubby wings make it impossible for them to use bow and arrows, let alone ray guns and they don't hitch rides on balloons.



LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 11: TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY

Awwww, look how afraid and lonely Dizzy looks. How could you not want to rescue the Oliver Twins' beloved creation when the first time you see him he's in such immediate peril? Alright, so giving you only one life to play around with may have been an oversight, but we'd rescue the cute little ovoid any day of the week.



JUST IN AS WE WERE GOING TO PRESS EA ANNOUNCED A BRAND NEW COMPILATION FEATURING TITLES SUCH AS SYNDICATE, DESERT STRIKE AND ROAD RASH





» For those who don't know, this is *Strider*. Worship it now



» Capcom's *Magic Sword* will soon be heading to the PS2 and Xbox

THE HIT LISTS

CAPCOM, SEGA AND ANNOUNCE THE FULL LINE-UPS FOR THEIR LATEST RETRO COMPILATIONS

As Christmas approaches, publishers are putting the final touches to the compilations that will part us from our hard-earned cash. Following the success of *Capcom Classics* for the Xbox and PS2, and its recent PSP compilation, Capcom's next two compilations don't actually sound all that impressive – mainly because many of the games have already appeared on its previous compendiums.

Reloaded is effectively the original *Capcom Classics* pack that was available on the Xbox and PS2 but will now include scrolling fighters *The King Of Dragons* and *Knights Of The Round*, as well as the rather wonderful *Eco Fighters*, an excellent scrolling shooter with an eco-friendly theme.

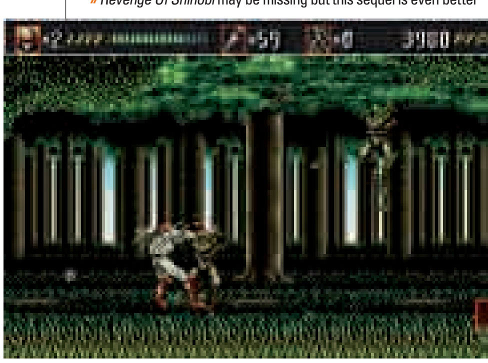
An air of secrecy has been surrounding the second *Capcom Classics* pack, and now it's finally been revealed it's easy to see why, as like *Reloaded* there's hardly any new content on it. Available early next year *Capcom Classics Vol 2* will feature the three new titles that are also appearing on *Reloaded* as well as a large slice of the gaming action that appeared on *Capcom Classics Collection Remixed*. So that means *Strider*, *Black Tiger*, *Magic Sword*, *Street Fighter* and *Mega Twins* can all be enjoyed in the privacy of your own home.

While both new compilations feature an excellent selection of games, it's a little bit naughty that Capcom has done nothing more than recycle content from its first two compilations.

Still, at least this means it's going to have to come up with brand new titles for any future releases.

The next compilation is *Sega Genesis Collection* – which will obviously be renamed in the UK – and amazingly it's already coming under fire on various hardcore websites, with some individuals referring to it as nothing more than a "Legal Rom Set". They're probably still crying like spoilt brats because Sega has neglected to include any of the *Streets Of Rage* games. Our advice is to ignore this petty pouting, as while it's obvious that Sega has another compilation up its sleeve, there's still plenty of Mega Drive goodness available including *Golden Axe*, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, *Shinobi III*, *Ecco The Dolphin* and *Phantasy Star IV*. Special mention must also go to *Ecco Jr*, which was only previously available in Australia.

» *Revenge Of Shinobi* may be missing but this sequel is even better



THOSE LISTS IN FULL…

CAPCOM CLASSICS VOL 2

1941, Avengers, Black Tiger, Block Block, Captain Commando, Eco Fighters, Knights Of The Round, King Of Dragons, Last Duel, Mega Twins, Magic Sword, Quiz And Dragons, Side Arms, The Speed Rambler, Street Fighter I, Street Fighter II Turbo, Strider, Three Wonders, Tiger Road, Varth

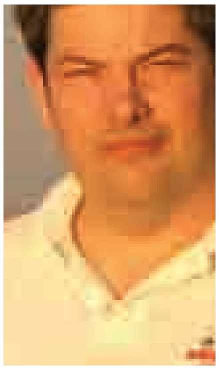
CAPCOM CLASSICS RELOADED

Ghosts 'N Goblins, Ghouls 'N Ghosts, Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts, Street Fighter II – Champion Edition, Street Fighter II – Hyper Fighting, The King Of Dragons, Knights Of The Round, Mercs, Gunsmoke, Commando, Eco Fighters, 1942, 1943, Vulgus, Exed Exes, SonSon, Pirate Ship Higemaru

SEGA GENESIS COLLECTION

Alex Kidd – The Enchanted Castle, Altered Beast, Bonanza Bros, Columns, Comix Zone, Decap Attack, Ecco The Dolphin, Ecco: The Tides Of Time, Ecco Jr, Eternal Champions, Flicky, Gain Ground, Golden Axe, Golden Axe II, Golden Axe III, Phantasy Star II, Phantasy Star III, Phantasy Star IV, Ristar, Shadow Dancer, Shinobi III, Sonic The Hedgehog, Sonic The Hedgehog 2, Super Thunderblade, Sword Of Vermillion, Vectorman, Vectorman 2, Virtua Fighter 2





"APE-DESCENDED LIFE FORMS SO AMAZINGLY PRIMITIVE THAT THEY STILL THINK DIGITAL WATCHES ARE A PRETTY NEAT IDEA"
DOUGLAS ADAMS



1972 Lucien Piccard Dynamic Scattering Display pre-LCD watch

1974 Close up of Omega LED watch revealing each individual LED 'dot'

1974 Before and After photo of my early restored Seiko LCD and yes that really is the same watch! £10 off eBay, now maybe worth £400.

1974 Early Seiko LCD watch, simple and elegant

1974 Close up of a typical early LED module with many microchip components

1975 Pulsar world's first LED Calculator Watch

1978 Hewlett Packard HP01 LED chronograph alarm calculator

1977 Pulsar Bigtime LED day date watch

1978 Seiko LCD world timer

1978 Seiko solar powered Alarm chronograph

» 1972 Pulsar P1 the world's first LED watch yours for £15,000



COMMENT

DIGITAL WATCHES

Every few months I like to divert away from games …

Being an arcade collector I tend to get mixed up with other retro things. As a kid in the Seventies I watched Atari define the games industry. I was fascinated by the Digital Watch revolution going on at the same time, from the very first red Light Emitting Diode (LED) watch onwards. These were hugely desirable in the mid-Seventies and demand for the 'Space Age Time Pieces' outstripped supply. They were hailed as the first new way to tell time in over 500 years.

I remember watching *Tomorrow's World* in 1972 as Raymond Baxter demonstrated an early Pulsar LED watch. They had to dim the studio lights to show the glowing red digits to the cameras. Nothing like it had ever been seen before and it left most people convinced it was techno magic.

But the biggest boost to demand for digital watches occured when James Bond deployed his Pulsar P2 in *Live And Let Die*. That was it. All aspiring secret agents everywhere absolutely had to have one.

Then in 1973 I saw Mr Baxter demonstrate a very early Seiko Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) digital watch, only this time they didn't need to dim the lights as the display was 'always on', and sure enough James Bond started wearing Seiko LCD watches. LCDs had the advantage of not needing a button press, but few people remember that Pulsar LED watches had a 'wrist flick' feature that turned the display on when you raised your arm. It was designed well enough to not trigger the power hungry LEDs as you walked about. Very neat idea at the time but long forgotten it seems.

The first Pulsar LED watch, the P1, was a complex module embedded in a solid gold case and strap and cost a fantastic $4,000… back in April 1972! They were perceived as the must-have gadget. They were made to an incredibly high standard to justify the price. Competition did start to nibble away at the price, but Pulsar remained in the lead through to 1975 when they introduced the world's first LED calculator watch, also in solid gold for the same price, although stainless steel versions followed at $500. To put that into perspective, my parents bought a three bed-semi in North London for £6,000 the same year. Today these stainless steel LED calculators fetch up to £1,000.

Through 1974/5 the race was on. Pulsar produced about 30 models for men and women but rapid monthly developments saw the Far East bang out millions of cheap imitations with simplified modules, and prices start to fall dramatically, as did quality and engineering integrity. Prices dropped to under $100 by 1976. In parallel to this LED evolution, the watch industry was trying to develop reliable LCDs as they had the advantage of using almost no power whilst displaying the time constantly, like a conventional watch. LCDs evolved from the short lived 'Dynamic scattering displays' also first shown in 1972, into the type of LCD we now see everywhere in watches to flat screen TVs. And by 1977 the LCD had won the sales battle and LED watches faded into obscurity. Until now…

Today, the rarest and most valuable digital watch in the world is the same Pulsar P1. Although only 400 were made, there are only 27 known in existence today. Mint working ones change hands for the best part of £15,000. £15k for a digital watch!

Luckily, models like the P2, P3 from 1972/3/4 were made by the 10,000 and are commonplace on eBay. A nice P2 will go for around £250 to £500 and even dead ones can be fixed – although it helps to know what you're buying.

So now in 2006 there's widespread interest in everything retro, and digital watch collectors love anything to do with Pulsar and the other famous quality brands including Hamilton, Omega, and Seiko. Due to the rising values of these collectible watches a small industry has emerged, as people now want to restore them, make tiny new parts for them, refinish the cases to appear new again, and so on.

And yes, you've guessed it, I hoard, sorry, collect and wear various early LEDs and LCDs. One advantage of watches over a *Pac-Man* cabinet is that you can send them in the post, stick them on eBay, and generally trade them more easily!

I wear them too, and am surprised at people drawn to the red glow when they realise its an original and not one of the cheapo backlit fakes that litter eBay.

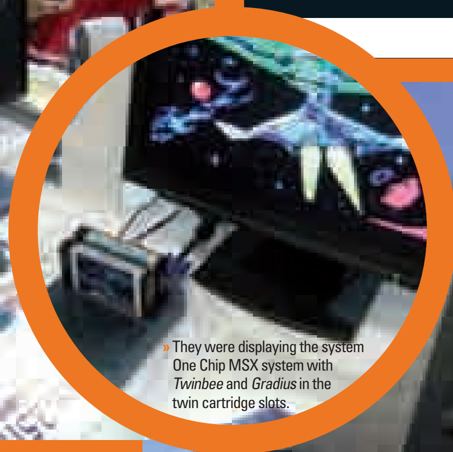
Amongst other projects on the go, I've been compiling a fat book about Digital Watches, featuring a broad history from day one, hundreds of high quality images, the varieties out there, close-ups, tech explanations, and even a chapter on cheesy Seventies adverts showing how your life would change with one on your wrist.

Douglas Adams once described humans as "ape-descended life forms so amazingly primitive that they still think digital watches are a pretty neat idea." So I am obviously regressing, as I've been ape about Digitals for years, not to mention the fact I am getting more hairy!

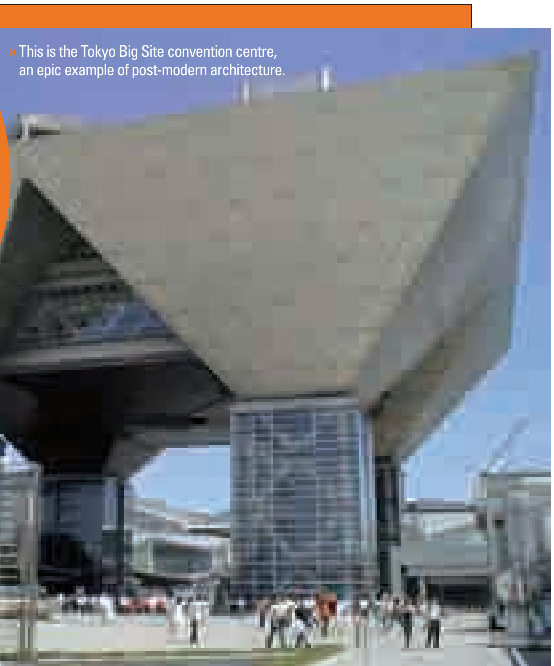
ARCH



» Did you attend Comiket this year? Were you pimping Retro Gamer? Because we know where every reader lives.



» They were displaying the system One Chip MSX system with *Twinbee* and *Gradius* in the twin cartridge slots.



» This is the Tokyo Big Site convention centre, an epic example of post-modern architecture.

'COMIKET 70' ROUND-UP

AWESOME DOUJIN CONVENTION HERALDS RETRO REVELATIONS

Direct from the Tokyo Big Sight centre we bring you exciting coverage on the retro events occurring at the annual doujin Comiket convention which took place from August 11 to 13 this year. The title stands for "Comic Market" but it covers all media, including games, and it's one of the hottest events that Japan hosts.

Made available at Comiket 70 were a variety of retro themed music albums. The first was Firecracker's "PC-88 Music Collection Vol.35 Magical Revival" which has newly composed music specifically designed for NEC's ancient PC-88 home computer (very loosely analogous to the C64) – the disc also features other original content for running on said computer relic. Another album was Woodsoft's "RetroPC! Game Ookoku" which features a compilation of locally remixed Japanese PC chip-tunes (based on popular games like *Solfice, Ys, Hydlide, Fray,* etc).

Another exciting highlight was D4 Enterprises' showing of their highly desirable "One Chip MSX" product. As an MSX clone on a single chip it promises to allow easy and accurate running of MSX games – highly useful given most hardware is slowly decaying. It features two cartridge ports, but the best inclusion is an SD Card slot which should allow easy playing of just about anything. It also supports both VGA and RCA output, PS2 keyboards, and a mouse via the joystick port. Planned pricing is 20,000 Yen (aprox £100), which is a good deal considering what it provides and the fact that it has new components rather than an old system off eBay.

The rest of Comiket 70 was a frenzied rush of games and manga which left Retro Gamer dizzy. Until next year doujin fans!

» For interested online shoppers, this is the "RetroPC! Game Ookoku" compilation of remixed game tunes.





RETRO GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING RETRO GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



OCTOBER 06

CAPCOM CLASSICS RELOADED

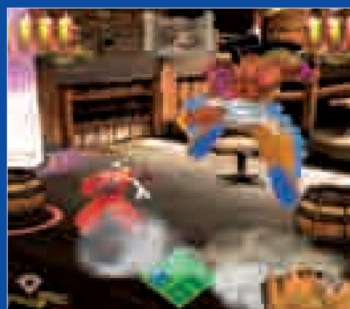
Released: 10 November

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

Capcom pushes ahead with its second PSP compilation (third if you count the US only *Capcom Puzzle World*) and like *Remix* it's looking good. Stalwart regulars such as *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, *Commando* and *Street Fighter II* will be sharing UMD space with more unusual titles such as the wonderful *Eco Fighters* and *The King Of Dragons*. We can't wait.



OCTOBER 06

POWER STONE

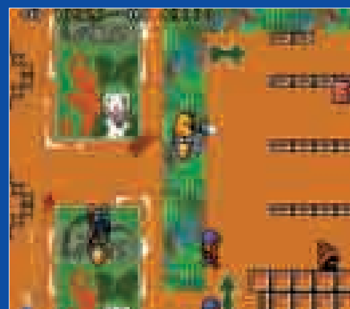
Released: 13 October

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP

The diary is turning into Capcom corner. Still, if other publishers aren't prepared to offer the same sort of retro goodness then what can we do? (I'm sure we've already said this Ed). Fans of the Dreamcast games will be pleased that Capcom has tweaked its superb franchise and an early play confirms that it still has the magic that made the original games so much fun to play.



OCTOBER 06

TAITO LEGENDS: POWER-UP

Released: 06 October

Publisher: Xplosiv

Price: £19.99

Format: PSP

We've been playing early preview code of *Power-Up* for some time now and, while it's a solid compilation, it's not up to the standards of Xplosiv's efforts. Maybe it's the lack of hit titles, or it could be that we've been playing the superior Japanese version (it has *Rainbow Islands* on it) but with Capcom now owning the portable retro gaming market, *Power-Up* has its work cut out. Great price though.



EVENT!

SEPT/OCTOBER 06

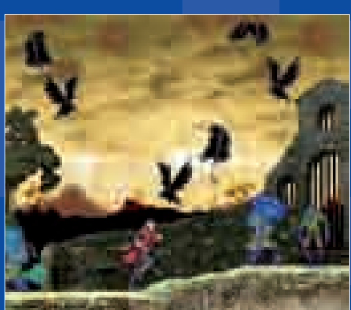
RETRO FUSION

Dates: 31 September/01 October

Location: The Warden's Cricket Club, Kenilworth

Admission: £15

First it was on, then it was off (as announced last month) and now it's back on again. We know that organiser Chris Wilkins has had a lot on his plate recently, but we're elated to hear that everything is once again going ahead as normal. If you missed last year's event, then this is the perfect opportunity to make amends. Who knows, we may even beat you at a few games…



OCTOBER 06

CASTLEVANIA: PORTRAIT OF RUIN

Released: 29 October

Publisher: Konami

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Released in time for Halloween, the next part of the *Castlevania* franchise introduces an important slant to the gameplay – namely the ability to play co-operatively. With its new setting (World War II) and the ability to switch between the two characters at will (or to explore the surroundings with a partner) this is looking like a worthy follow-up to *Dawn Of Sorrow*. Don't let us down Konami.



NOVEMBER 06

MEGA COLLECTION

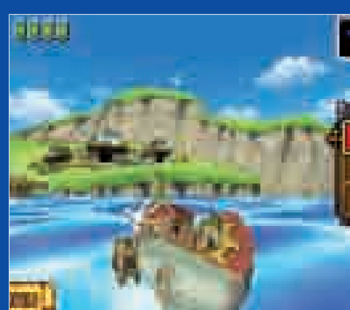
Released: November (US)

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, PS2

Well we've seen the final list of games and, to be honest, we're a teensy bit upset. While there are still some fantastic games available, including *Shinobi III*, *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, *Phantasy Star IV* and *Ecco The Dolphin*, there are plenty of notable misses like *The Revenge of Shinobi*, *Castle Of Illusion* and the *Streets Of Rage* trilogy. The more cynical amongst you are already waiting for the next compilation to be released…



NOVEMBER 06

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: November

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Oh lordy, it's a *Zelda* game for the DS and it looks the business. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.



JANUARY 07

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL 2

Released: January

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

Capcom's second PS2/Xbox compilation contains all the games that featured on the first PSP compilation, not included on the first PS2 compilation, as well as all the games from the second PSP compilation that didn't already appear on the first PS2 compilation. Confused? We are. All you have to do now is to decide whether you want to play them at home or on the move.



» Richard "Monkey" Lendon, the new retro king of British arcades, standing in front of his wares

DRUMMING UP OUR OWN, PURE, GONZO JOURNALISM

A SOUTHAMPTON ROAD TRIP OF MONKEYS AND RETROCADES

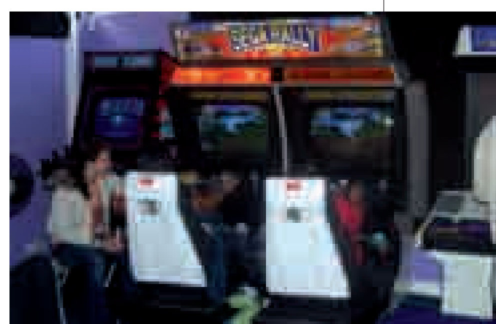
August 13, the Retro Gamer team is tasked with reporting on a recently opened "retro arcade" in Southampton. An arcade featuring classic games charged at retro prices? Such a thing warrants rigorous investigation and so Retro Gamer gleefully embarked on a quest to represent the cream of Britannia's gaming press at the joystick gala.

The arcade is on the first floor of Southampton's Starbytes Internet Café. We spoke with the owner, Mr Richard "Monkey" Lendon, who explained his new project, "Monkey Arcade", wasn't officially open but they were allowing sampling to generate publicity. "I wanted something that anyone who enjoys retro games can come down to and hang out. I think the major appeal is it's only 10 or 20p a game." The price was appealing, with 20p for games like *Radiant Silvergun* and only some bigger titles like *Sega Rally* requiring 50p.

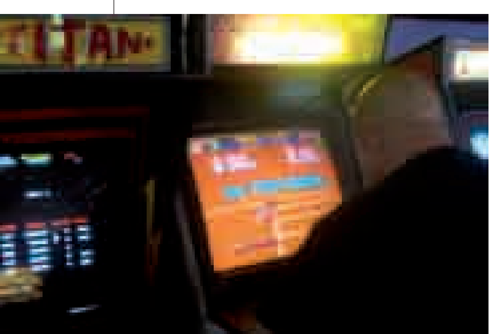
The fan of sprites elaborated "Lots of people remember this is how it used to be when they were young. This is how videogames started. No other arcade has them, and they won't go out on a limb to buy these, because they won't make much money." Richard's views on UK arcades will ring true with many readers, "There's a lot of unsavoury types in them, and people can feel uncomfortable. And they haven't got the classic games I enjoy anymore."

It's open from 9.30 to 6pm, but invitees are allowed to stay until 11pm. "It's just to keep out unsavoury types. A lot of this works on trust, but we've had no trouble." They're also planning fortnightly tournaments – entry is free, pay for your own credits, and the winner gets £50 in cash. A *Point Blank* tournament is scheduled for September. And his plans for the future? "It's going to remain like this for at least the next three years. Afterwards possibly buying other sites. My next project is a bar: a retro arcade bar." He also hinted at starting a console café.

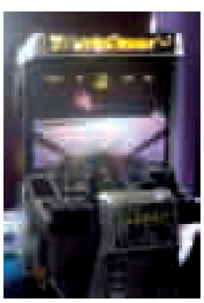
Richard spoke at length on the games displayed, in storage, and those still to arrive (see boxout). Loyal freelancer Sean Smith was one of the main consultants for the arcade; they have titles to suit everyone. Richard explained they'd also be tinting the windows and repairing the air-conditioning. "I'm always worried about the stuff I've missed," he exclaims, so anyone heading down is encouraged to provide feedback. Overall, he's spent roughly £6000, but it only needs to make £10 a day to stay open. Retro Gamer can't wait to see how it develops. Stay tuned!



» This is what we like to see: happy smiling people enjoying a nice game of *Sega Rally*



» Sean Smith, RG freelancer and arcade consultant, defeating all competitors at Sega's *Decathlete*



» Though small the arcade is clean with a nice atmosphere, and free of both cigarette burns and smoke

ON THE DAY:

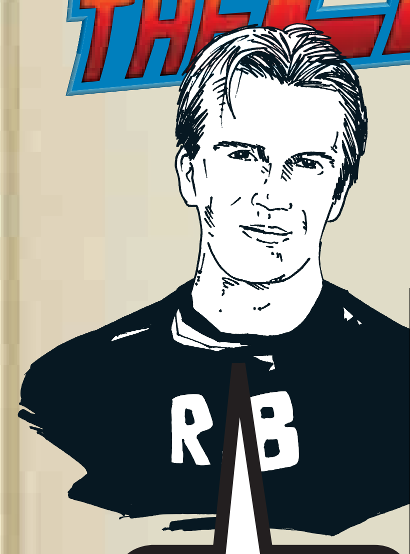
- Soul Calibur 3 (PS2)
- 4P Gauntlet Legends (50p)
- Metal Slug X (20p)
- Blazing Star (20p)
- Super Space Invaders '91 (10p)
- Decathlete (20p)
- NBA-Jam (40p)
- Sega Rally (50p)
- Radiant Silvergun (20p)
- Street Fighter Zero 3 (20p)
- Sega's Star Wars (50p)
- The House Of The Dead (30p)
- Point Blank (30p)
- Fruit Machines x 2
- Strider (10p)
- 4P Turtles Arcade (20p)

PLANNED:

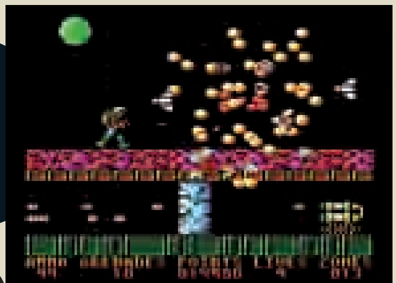
- Virtual On
- Dance Dance Revolution
- Soul Edge Ver. 2
- Mercs
- Alien VS Predator
- Dungeons & Dragons: SOM
- Aliens
- Super Smash TV
- Dynablaster
- Daytona USA
- Track & Field
- Border Down
- Guilty Gear XX
- Marvel VS Capcom
- Aprox. 30 MVS games
- Custom made Katamari cab

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

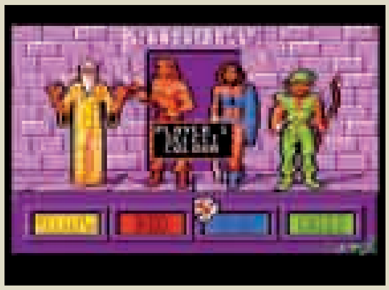
THE LATEST NEWS FROM SEPT 1987



New mags, a huge computer show, a new Sinclair machine, Spectrum price cuts, Commodore get shirty and Rick Astley at number one… It can only be Back To The Eighties. Richard Burton manoeuvres his rose tinted, nostalgia encrusted, time buggy for a spin down Random Access Memory Lane circa September 1987…



» Raffaele Cecco's style shines through again on the CPC. Big colourful sprites (a la *Equinox*) and a great game

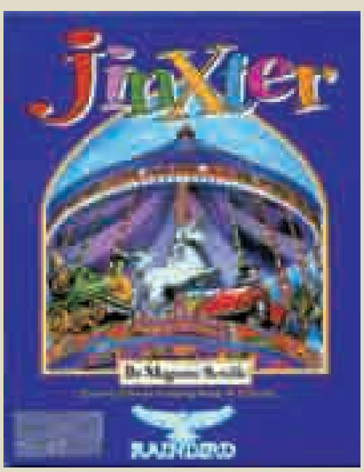


» Faced with a choice of four characters, always go for the hippy dude in the yellow dressing gown

The Personal Computer World show, the biggest multi-format event in the UK made its tenth anniversary year, and was held at Olympia in London from September 23 to 27.

Although the first two days were given over to business and trade visitors only, the final three days were purely for the gamers. There were oodles of new products and games on show to tempt the public into surrendering their hard-earned cash.

Virtually anyone and everyone who had ever released a piece of software attended the show, which meant an awful lot of new software titles announced simultaneously. Firstly though, there was some legal wranglings. Microprose had previously announced that it was planning to sue Cascade Games for similarities between its *Pirates!* box artwork and Cascade's *Pirates Of The Barbary Coast* game for the Commodore 64. Both covers featured pirate ships!



» Not many text adventures start with you getting knocked down by a bus

Cascade was quite miffed and decided to serve a writ to Microprose, on the basis that its impending legal action was unlawful. However, for maximum effect it decided to serve it at the Microprose stand at the PCW show whilst a throng of bemused gamers looked on.

Microprose never followed up with its threat. Cascade, incensed by the fiasco, attempted to claim damages for the harm done to its reputation as a software producer.

Rainbird, one of British Telecom's many software labels, made quite an impression with several outstanding titles enjoying their first public previews. The superb *Universal Military Simulator* was unveiled to much excitement although no release date had been set. Also on view was Jinxter, a terrific adventure produced in partnership with *Magnetic Scrolls*.

US Gold made an effort and showed off *Gauntlet 2* for the 8-bit systems whilst releasing the incredibly mediocre *Indiana Jones* and the *Temple Of Doom* for the Atari ST. Also present were Activision demonstrating *Enduro Racer* for the ST and Electronic Arts were previewing its classic game, *The Bard Tales*, due for imminent release on the ST.

The show itself was a massive success with an estimated 80,000 people savouring every piece of hardware and software on view during its three-day stint.

Away from the show arena, there was news that Sir Clive Sinclair had once again entered the computing market with his brand new Z88, a compact little portable machine. Running on a Z80 processor and having a rather small LCD screen, the Z88 was a very competent machine but failed to ignite the imagination of the public, which, ultimately, reflected in its average sales.

Commodore entered the world of football sponsorship by announcing a three-year shirt deal with one of London's less successful clubs, Chelsea. The deal was worth £1.25 million, which, although a lot of money back then, would barely get you meat pie and a cup of Bovril at Stamford Bridge today.

Amstrad twiddled with its computer pricing structure and slashed £50 off the Spectrum +3, taking it under the £200 barrier. The Spectrum +2 also had a small price reduction of £10 lowering it to £139.

Behind the price cuts there seemed to be a bigger picture developing. Many felt the reductions were potentially life-threatening to Amstrad's own CPC series. News followed that WH Smith had reportedly dropped the CPC systems from its stores and that several computer magazines had cancelled CPC advertisements.

Were Amstrad winding down the CPC range in favour of squeezing the last few drops of profit out of the Spectrum? There



» All hail the king. Well sank you very mush… uh huh bleurghhh...

1987

SEPTEMBER NEWS



September 2 saw a 19-year-old German pilot, Mathias Rust, begin his trial in Moscow for flying a Cessna light aircraft from Hamburg, passing through Soviet airspace and their air defence system, then going on to land his plane in the centre of Red Square near the Kremlin in Moscow. Mr Rust's reward for his stunt was to serve 432 days in a Russian prison. In the USA, on September 28, a new TV series, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*, had its debut on syndicated television. Initial reaction was mixed, although the new characters, such as Captain Picard and the android, Data, soon became firm favourites and won over even the most ardent and cynical Trekkers.On September 11, Peter Tosh, one of the founder members of Bob Marley's band, The Wailers, was shot dead during a bungled burglary at his home in Jamaica. He was 42. On the same day, actor Lorne Greene, famous for his role as Commander Adama in Eighties sci-fi classic *Battlestar Galactica* died at the age of 72.

» If you want to really impress the KGB, fly a plane through the middle of Red Square – just for a laugh…



» Commander Adama, is that an Elvis jumpsuit you're wearing?



» The similarity between box covers is startling. They both feature ships, the word pirate and the colour brown – shocking



» From *Attack Of The Mutant Zombie Flesh Eating Chickens From Mars* to *Star Paws* via a bit of tweaking

certainly seemed to be some element of truth to the rumours…

The king of cheapo software, Mastertronic, announced that it, rather surprisingly, had attained the rights to sell several of Ultimate's old back catalogue, in a deal with present owners US Gold. Titles such as *Outlaws*, *Alien 8* and *Sabre Wulf* would get a second wind through the Ricochet label, at a price of £1.99.

Mastertronic was not content with re-releasing old classics though. It also revealed that Melbourne House, the company it had acquired earlier in the year, would again start selling full-price software, with releases for 8-bit and 16-bit formats. Games announced in the first wave of releases included *Kelly X*, *Street Hassle* and *Rockford*.

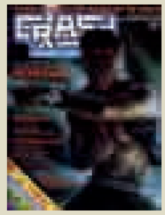
Software old-timer Bug Byte, now owned by Argus Press, announced a game based on the World Cup moment that perturbed a generation of England fans. *Peter Shilton's Handball Maradona* was a mediocre game although it did feature some of the finest, yet unfeasibly bendy, banana shots seen in a computer game anywhere.

The computer magazine market was about to become a little more congested when Newsfield revealed it had a new magazine ready for imminent release. Entitled, The Games Machine, it would be a multi-format magazine and cover the growing console market as well as the popular computer systems, in its own inimitable style. Coincidentally, Future Publishing also announced a new publication that would follow almost the exact same recipe as The Games Machine. Advanced Computer Entertainment, or ACE for short, would be in direct competition with its Newsfield rival. Both October issues of The Games Machine and ACE would hit the newsstands at the end of September.

In the pages of Crash magazine, a plethora of creamy gaming goodness was being spoon fed to the eager readers. The Crash Smashes for this month were awarded to *Mercenary* (Novagen), *Custerds Quest* (The Power House) and *Stifflip & Co* (Palace Software). *Renegade* (Ocean), narrowly missed a Smash award, managing a very respectable 89% in its review.

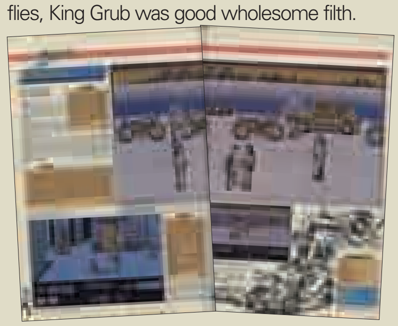
For the Zzapsters there was also an eclectic assortment of Sizzler winners on show. *Zynaps* (Hewson), *Re-Bounder* (Gremlin Graphics), *Guild Of Thieves* (Magnetic Scrolls/Rainbird) and *Star Paws* (Software Projects) all got Sizzled, with *California Games* (Epyx/US Gold) winning out with the Gold Medal this month.

THIS MONTH IN…



Crash Flash

Although it missed out on a Crash Smash, Ocean's *Renegade* was the featured game of Crash Issue 44. Inside, is the introduction of the cartoon blubber-monger, King Grub. Complete with body fluids and talking flies, King Grub was good wholesome filth.





Zzap! Back

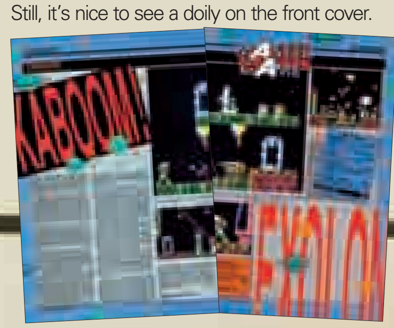
With a blue sky and a fierce sun, Zzap!64 Issue 29 featured a young skateboarding dude in homage to *California Games* attaining Gold Medal status. Inside, the winner of the monthly software charts voting draw was… me… which was nice!





Amstrad Action

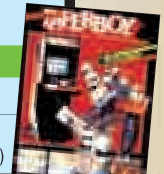
Issue 24 saw Amstrad Action celebrating their second birthday and they continued the theme on the front cover with a cake with Alan Sugar on it. The headline? Icing Sugar… now you see what they've done there… marvellous. Still, it's nice to see a doily on the front cover.



CHARTS

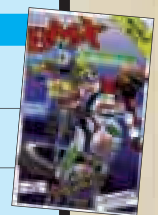
SEPT 1987

AMSTRAD



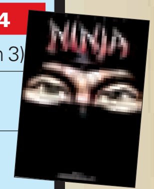
1. Paperboy (Elite)
2. Barbarian (Palace Software)
3. 6 Pak (Elite)
4. Exolon (Hewson)
5. Ball Crazy (Mastertronic)

SPECTRUM



1. BMX Simulator (Codemasters)
2. The Milk Race (Mastertronic)
3. Barbarian (Palace Software)
4. Road Runner (US Gold)
5. Destructo (Bulldog)

COMMODORE 64



1. Last Ninja (System 3)
2. Barbarian (Palace Software)
3. Enduro Racer (Activision)
4. Road Runner (US Gold)
5. World Class Leaderboard (US Gold)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART SEPT '87

1. Never Gonna Give You Up (Rick Astley)
2. Wipe Out (Fat Boys & The Beach Boys)
3. Heart And Soul (T'Pau)
4. What Have I Done To Deserve This (The Pet Shop Boys & Dusty Springfield)
5. Some People (Cliff Richard)



OPERATION WOLF

YOU HAVE SUSTAINED A LETHAL INJURY



- **PUBLISHER:** TAITO
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+



HISTORY

Don't worry; this isn't going to be a 300-word argument on whether *Operation Wolf* is an actual lightgun game or not (we'll leave that for another day). No, this is simply a chance to pay homage to a game that enabled you to blow away hordes of enemies for the paltry sum of two ten pences.

First released in 1987, Taito's *Operation Wolf* immediately stood out thanks to its huge cabinet and fantastic art design. Oh, and the fact that it had a replica Uzi sub-machine gun strapped to the front of it probably helped as well…

Set over six increasingly challenging stages, your goal was to destroy a set number of enemies, whilst avoiding or rescuing the many civilians that always seemed to appear at the most inappropriate moments. Although you only had a set number of bullets and rockets, extra ammunition was carelessly placed around each stage and could be collected with a carefully aimed shot. Failing that you could gain more by simply shooting at the pigs, vultures or chickens that would appear at certain points in the game, and let's face it that's much more fun.

All this extra ammo was soon put to good use though, as Taito absolutely swarmed you with enemies. As well as facing off against a variety of different enemy soldiers, you also had to contend with choppers, armoured tanks, riverboats and much more. Needless to say, the game's vehicles took a fair amount of bullets before they exploded, so your best friend was a well-placed rocket.

What really made *Operation Wolf* though, wasn't the cool cutscenes, fantastically detailed sprites or hectic gameplay, no it was that bloody big Uzi that you got to use. Feeling the gun shudder away against your arm while you took down wave after wave of enemy soldiers was immensely satisfying and delivered an experience that few other games of the time were able to match – providing of course that the bloody thing was actually working!





460
:5
ENEMIES
38
3
HOSTAGE
0
DAMAG

THE MAKING OF...

SAMURAI WARRIOR:

THE BATTLES OF USAGI YOJIMBO

Anthropomorphic fighting animals were big business in the Eighties, but while Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles took the world by storm, Stan Sakai's tales of a ronin bunny went largely unnoticed. Luckily, Miyamoto Usagi's exploits sparked the imagination of Beam's developers, and they crafted a unique, much-loved beat-'em-up that's stood the test of time.







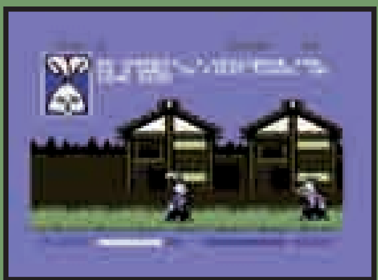


» The bounty on Usagi's head means crazed bounty hunters regularly attack him



» Bowing to others occasionally yields useful information; more often, however, other characters merely impart philosophical wisdom





» In a small village, Miyamoto Usagi is challenged to a duel to first blood

Many in the Eighties would have considered a cult comic book about a ronin rabbit an unlikely source for a computer game, but not Beam Software, renowned for a number of top titles, including *Way Of The Exploding Fist* and *The Hobbit*. According to programmer Doug Palmer, there was a comics culture at the company at the time: "We were into 2000 AD, Love And Rockets, Raw, Critters (where cult title Usagi first appeared), and so on. Usagi was lying around, everyone enjoyed it, and Melbourne House founder Fred Milgrom spotted something." And so, licence in hand, the company set about creating the game that would be dubbed *Samurai Warrior: The Battles Of Usagi Yojimbo* and become something of a cult classic itself.

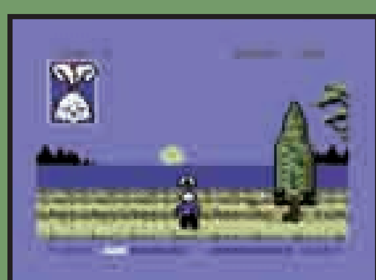
"ONE OF THE INCLUDED SAYINGS WAS, 'IF YOU MEET THE BUDDHA ON THE ROAD, KILL HIM'" DOUG PALMER

Doug remembers the game being very much a team effort: "Paul Kidd wrote the script, which sadly got somewhat butchered as we tried to squeeze everything into the C64. Russel Comte did the graphics and Neil Brennan wrote the music." Usefully, Fred Milgrom had an advanced view of software engineering, and was interested in virtual machines, software components and object-oriented programming. "As a result, I had a library of pre-existing components to work with, and the game was therefore fairly easy to programme – most 'difficult bits' were solved by grabbing some pre-existing code," explains Doug, who reckons this was an essential aspect of the game's success. "Because the game was largely assembled from library code, all of the effort went into the storyline and the gameplay."

At first, Doug recalls that the team got hung-up on swordplay, which is, unsurprisingly, a major component of the Usagi Yojimbo books (see 'A samurai's story' for more background on the comics). "We had the idea of a *Seven Samurai*-style duel, where two opponents run at each other, leaving one standing and one slowly collapsing," recalls Doug. "After a couple of weeks, the medication took hold and we began looking at the larger context of the game…" In the end, Beam's creation evolved into a sideways-scrolling beat-'em-up – a genre that was looking tired well before the late Eighties; and yet, *Samurai Warrior* breathed new life into the genre, transcending its derivative nature, and becoming far more than a generic hack-'em-up, but with a sword-wielding rabbit as its main character.

According to Doug, this was down to Paul's desire to get strategic decision-making into the game, thereby making it feel a little more like an adventure, where you could become fully immersed in Usagi's quest to rescue Lord Noriyuki from the clutches of the evil Lord Hikiji. The branched map was initially a major part of this, but the choices of route rapidly diminished as the team ran out of memory. Instead, the limited locations Usagi could explore became populated with numerous characters, and the game was regularly punctuated by varied events, including attacks by bounty hunters, Usagi getting challenged to duels, and the sudden appearance of hidden assailants, who'd hide in the undergrowth or be in disguise, revealing themselves at the last possible moment. Despite anthropomorphic animals being peppered throughout as main characters, Usagi's game world feels surprisingly real. In stark contrast to superficially similar games, such as *Barbarian II*, *Samurai Warrior* has radical changes of pace, with many peaceful moments, including when Usagi gambles, takes in a meal at an inn, or meets priests on the road (many of whom offer advice or some philosophical wisdom when you bow to them, by way of a text-based caption above the main gaming area). "The desire to have a more textured game that captured the more expansive spirit of the comics was there from the start," explains Doug. "In the comics, Usagi spends a lot of time just enjoying the countryside or interacting politely with other people. We wanted to retain this element of samurai life, and I'd have had players writing haiku if I could have figured out how to do it!"

Unsurprisingly, Eastern ideals impacted on the game. "A major influence was 'Zen Flesh, Zen Bones', a collection of Zen stories and koans from Japan," says Doug, noting that many of the priests' sayings are found within it. "The book also helped us develop the general approach of the game," explains Doug. "One of the included sayings was, 'If you meet the Buddha on the road, kill him', one of those impossibly elliptical statements that makes Zen so much fun," continues Doug, who enjoys the fact that you can "find a mountain of commentary on those ten words, none of which treats the statement literally". That said, these semi-obscure statements, peppered throughout the game, confused

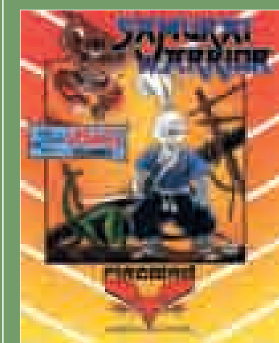


» His quest complete, Usagi watches the sun sinking from the sky, safe in the knowledge that Lord Noriyuki is out of harm's way

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** FIREBIRD
» **DEVELOPER:** BEAM SOFTWARE
» **RELEASED:** 1988
» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

HOBBIT, THE
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, C64, ZX SPECTRUM, APPLE II
YEAR: 1982-4

STREET HASSLE
SYSTEMS: C64, IBM PC
YEAR: 1987

WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST, THE
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, C64, ZX SPECTRUM, C16/PLUS4, MSX
YEAR: 1985/6

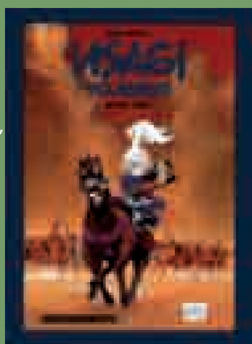


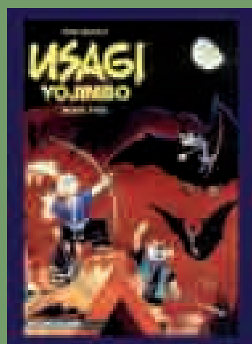
THE MAKING OF...
SAMURAI WARRIOR

A SAMURAI'S STORY

The brainchild of third-generation Japanese American Stan Sakai, Usagi Yojimbo ('Rabbit Bodyguard') follows the exploits of Miyamoto Usagi, a samurai who serves no master, and is therefore known as a 'ronin' (a masterless samurai). Set around 1600 AD, the comic book follows Usagi as he makes his living as a Yojimbo ('bodyguard for hire'), wandering Honshu, Japan's main island. Each book features lush monochromatic art that's faithful to the period, with the obvious exception of the anthropomorphic animals, which replace humans. (Tokage lizards replace most animals – and these also feature in the videogame). As Doug notes, "Steve Gallacci, author of the Albedo comics, once remarked that anthropomorphic animals have more emotional impact, because we've become desensitised to human suffering. The use of anthropomorphic animals in Usagi Yojimbo therefore 'bypasses' our filters, heightening emotional realism – both for the comics and for the game."

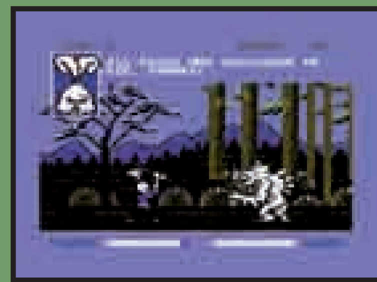
The official Usagi Yojimbo website can be found at www.usagiyojimbo.com, and volumes of Usagi's exploits are available from Fantagraphics Books (www.fantagraphics.com) and Dark Horse Comics (www.darkhorse.com).



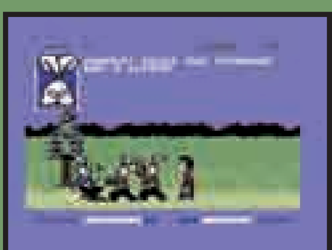




» Panda cub daimyo Lord Noriyuki looks on as Usagi attempts to dispatch the game's final guardian



» A huge monster lurks in the woods, providing a formidable challenge to our ronin bunny hero



» When Miyamoto Usagi fails to bow to persons of higher status, he insults them deeply and is attacked by their guards



» Gambling in one of the village inns can increase your ryo count – or leave you penniless

some – one reviewer remarked that they couldn't find a Buddha to kill! "It hadn't occurred to me that, in the context of a beat-'em-up game, you could interpret the koan as a literal clue," says Doug. "The whole idea of not finding the Buddha in the game was just perfect!"

Aspects of Eastern beliefs that caused fewer problems were the concepts of honour, strict etiquette and karma, integral to the Usagi Yojimbo comic books, and somewhat woven into the game by way of its scoring system. Unlike most beat-'em-ups, it's often better to avoid fights in *Samurai Warrior*, rather than attack anything that moves. In the game, Usagi's afforded two modes, 'peaceful' and 'aggressive', determined by whether or not his sword is drawn. In peaceful mode, he can bow to persons of equal status and must bow to those of greater status, or he will insult them (resulting in guards attacking); however, although Usagi needn't bow to those of lower status, doing so gains 'karma' points. Although less essential later on in his quest, these points are vital early on, because Usagi begins the game almost bereft of karma, and should this value fall to zero, he's forced to take the honourable way out: ritual suicide.

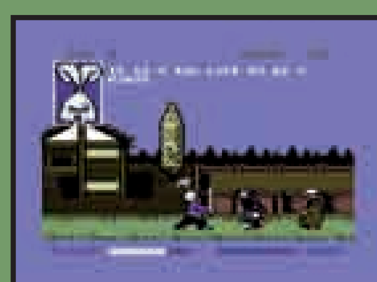
In aggressive mode, Usagi can attack enemies with his sword (three movements are on offer – 'parry', 'sideswipe' and 'overhead cut' – determined by how long the fire button is held down). However, players must be mindful that approaching someone with your sword drawn results in them assuming you're aggressive, causing many characters to attack when they normally wouldn't – and some put up more of a fight than you'd expect. "The absolute bloody viciousness of the priests came as a surprise when we were testing the game," says Doug. "I didn't analyse it very much, but it seems to be a combination of the range of their kicks and the delay caused by being hit by them – you never quite get back on to the front foot. This seemed like just punishment for monstering a priest!"

All these elements combined to make *Samurai Warrior* more intelligent that its contemporaries and instilled in the player a sense of consequence. In other words, 'do unto others': if you're nice to others, your karma goes up, if not, you may lose karma or be attacked. "Although this tied into the comic and benefited the game, the reasons for including such things were actually more organic," says Doug. "Apart from the general desire to reflect the way of the samurai, Paul and I were role-players and getting a bit sick of the use-a-bigger-gun approach to role-playing. Paul developed this theme further in his paper RPGs, such as *Albedo* and *Lace & Steel*, where there are sophisticated mechanics for handling personal relationships." However, some elements were included to recall elements of Sakai's comics, notably the headshot of Usagi in the top-left corner. "We wanted to get a good picture of Usagi in, since his facial expressions are an important part of the feel of the comics and the full-figure characters on the C64 didn't have many

> "THE ABSOLUTE BLOODY VICIOUSNESS OF THE PRIESTS CAME AS A SURPRISE" DOUG PALMER



» Another traveller dishes out 'encouragement' to Miyamoto Usagi while his feet ice over



» Surprise attacks occur throughout the game – peasants turn out to be deadly ninja in disguise

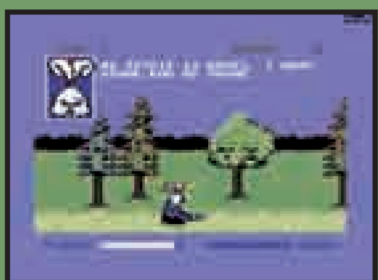




THE GAME HAS STOOD THE TEST OF TIME FOR OTHERS, TOO; AT THE TIME OF WRITING, SAMURAI WARRIOR PROUDLY SITS IN LEMON64'S TOP 30



» The game's control method can be tricky to get to grips with, so the included practice mode is useful



» If Usagi's karma drops to zero, he's forced to take the only honourable way out: seppuku (ritual suicide)

pixels available," remembers Doug. "Once we saw the various expressions, we started thinking of ways to use them." In the final game, this image is an indicator of Usagi's mood, and also provides additional feedback when an enemy strikes him. "The image serves another purpose, too – the top-left corner was otherwise a bit empty, since it was just a blue space and the natural focus of attention is to the right. You also tend to get cartouches in Japanese woodcuts and it provides a nice bit of added flavour," adds Doug.

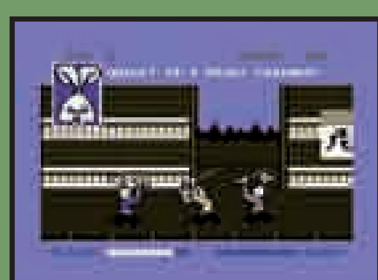
Although it provides extra visual punch and usability to the game, the large Usagi graphic also reminds Doug of the elements that didn't make it. "The saddest thing about creating this game was stripping out the parts of the script that we couldn't squeeze into 64Kb," he says. "Russel created a lovely mole ninja that came out of the ground, and Paul included numerous additional peaceful activities in the larger script: for example, he wrote a set of level challenges that involved rescuing a rider being dragged by a horse. All of it had to go." Doug also says he'd have liked to have explored the idea of karma a bit more: "The whole 'karma points' thing is a bit tacky. Instead, it would have been good to have your actions reflected back at you throughout the entire game. For example, if you killed a peasant early on, you would be attacked when unarmed, later in the game."

Despite Doug's slight misgivings about the game's final content, the press reacted favourably to the digital exploits of the samurai bunny; notably, Zzap!64 awarded the game a much-deserved Sizzler!, recognising its balance of innovation, cartoon appeal, solemnity and fun. Fittingly, Doug decided to go out on a high, leaving Beam after completing the project, returning to the world of academia. Strangely, leaving proved to be one of the high points of a fun, enjoyable programming job. "As I was about to go, the artists at Beam gave me a card that had me decked out in samurai gear, kneeling at a computer and talking to Usagi. I was very touched," he says.

Today, Doug fondly remembers his time working on *Samurai Warrior*, and reckons it's easily his favourite of the titles he worked on. The game has stood the test of time for others, too – at the time of writing, *Samurai Warrior* proudly sits in Lemon64's top 30. However, it didn't take until the recent flurry of retro-gaming activity on the Internet for Doug to realise the game had longevity. A few years after leaving Beam, he was travelling from Paris to Turkey when the conflict in Yugoslavia began. "This resulted in a lengthy trip around the country, on a packed night train from Athens to Istanbul. I was standing in the corridor, next to a professional skateboarder, and it turned out he was a fan of Usagi Yojimbo. Because sleep was not an option, we ended up discussing the game for almost the entire trip. It was quite surreal!"



» If Usagi leaves his sword drawn, everyone assumes he's hostile, which can lead to fatal scraps



» The game's final level finds Usagi battling deadly ninjas, bounty hunters and assassins as he hacks his way towards Lord Noriyuki

MUSICAL MEMORIES

Influenced by the band Japan and Chinese-music CD 'Phases Of The Moon', Neil Brennan's context-sensitive soundtrack for Usagi Yojimbo still enthrals today. Neil recalls Beam's soundtrack procedure began with Fred Milgrom coming to him with various requirements: "We'd bounce ideas around, and I'd go home and work on them on my four-track." Neil remembers Fred was keen on recycling out-of-copyright classical pieces, but Neil preferred creating new compositions. The quality of the demos would be argued over, with Neil determinedly sticking up for what he felt was good! "For *Usagi Yojimbo*, I had a free hand," recalls Neil. "In terms of the music, the pentatonic scale was important for oriental games, but mostly I got down what was in my head at the time. I was in and out of bands, and sometimes I'd get them to play songs I'd written for work, and their interpretations would filter back into the game, in a weird 'circle-of-life' way!"



THE CLASSIC GAME



DYNAMITE HEADDY

Treasure's classic trio of Gunstar Heroes, Alien Soldier, and Dynamite Headdy are highly acclaimed as some of the finest games of the 16-bit era Of these, Dynamite Headdy is sometimes ranked third, but Retro Gamer champions it as a true classic.



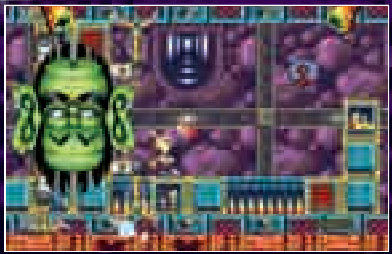
While Treasure has gained a reputation for producing triple-A titles, *Dynamite Headdy* has seldom been covered in the way it deserves. Granted, it's never been classed alongside Treasure's lesser games, like the atrocious *Light Crusader,* but it's always been hidden in the shadow of their other two Mega Drive classics, its own "classic status" applied almost reluctantly by critics. Even some Treasure fans incorrectly assert it's little more than a colourful but average platformer.

This is odd, since not only does the game burst onto screens with a thrilling chase sequence, but each level gets brighter and more varied as the game progresses. It would not be an excessively bold statement to rate it alongside Sega's own blue-toned mascot series.

While *Dynamite Headdy* may have lacked the same lick of speed, it contained a diverse assortment of levels all with different tasks, goals, secrets and special set-pieces to complete. After the initial brief chase sequence, the game jumps into a fight against the recurring arch-nemesis cat boss. The areas after this are the likely reason for people's apathy, since the game doesn't gain momentum until a few stages later and the appearance of what can only be described as a puppy-spewing sausage-dog amidst a philharmonic orchestra.

Some of the equally bizarre set-pieces that follow are: a level where the platforms twist and rotate above cardboard cut-outs of lava; several side-scrolling shoot-'em-up levels, featuring birds of prey and a soviet inspired boss; a tower stage undoubtedly influenced by *Nebulus*; two areas set inside a rocket-launching device; pseudo-3D spinning levels; stages that flip upside down; and others that defy all sensible description. There are also unique elements like the "Hangman" character, found on various high-up platforms, who can be latched onto with the hero's detached head. From here it can be used like a grappling hook to reach higher areas. Adding to the list of diverse gameplay "moments" is a basketball themed bonus round, where the goal is to score a set number of baskets. Several of these rounds are found in *Dynamite Headdy,* and completing them yields secret numbers which must be entered at the end of the game.

As the backgrounds show, the game is not set within traditional levels but rather the various sets to theatrical stage plays. Most background elements are pieces of cardboard or wooden scenery, nailed together. It adds nothing tangible to the game, but it shows that not only does Treasure have technical mastery over the hardware to create great visuals, it has the unique art direction needed to take advantage of such prowess. In all of these



» Ignore this colossal bearded head of doom – because just below Headdy you can spot a miner sipping a nice cuppa



» This bizarre basketball minigame is completely out of context with the main game, but it hides a special secret

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **VERSION FEATURED:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **DEVELOPER:** TREASURE
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



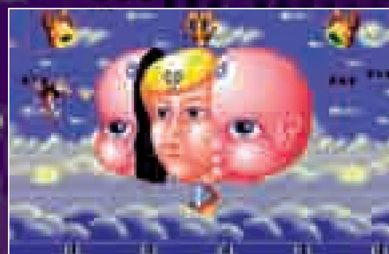


THE GAME DOESN'T TRULY GAIN MOMENTUM UNTIL THE APPEARANCE OF WHAT CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS A PUPPY-SPEWING SAUSAGE-DOG AMIDST A PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

"theatrical stage sets" there are secrets hidden away (to be collected and tallied at the end), self-referential jokes (posters advertising *Dynamite Headdy*, company logos), plus other touches guaranteed to induce bouts of grinning (the animation of the many harmless native characters who live in the back and foregrounds are truly wonderful for example). The stage names also make humorous references to pop culture and films, with one level titled "Twin Freaks" and another called "Terminate Her Too" – a small point, but one which suits the gameplay.

Dynamite Headdy has a relentless kind of signature eccentricity, whereby you can instantly recognise it was Treasure who made the game. There isn't enough page real-estate to describe or depict each of the many whimsical moments that occur. The sheer amount of variety contained within actually defies comprehension – you must remember it was limited by cartridge capacity, so every new sprite is a surprise to be savoured. There are so many details you can never hope to see them all in one sitting – thankfully multiple play-throughs are a joy. Treasure made the Mega Drive weep hues of colour never thought possible, and then used it to showcase the parallax scrolling which had been mastered and also its trademark characters with multiple giant disembodied limbs. Some notable examples include a pair of clown puppets (with one swinging from the other), and of course the enormous "Spinderella" where you must traverse both the foreground and background to its rotating level. They also took great care with the audio, so as is customary for Treasure, the music and effects are excellent. There's also a healthy amount of digitised speech.

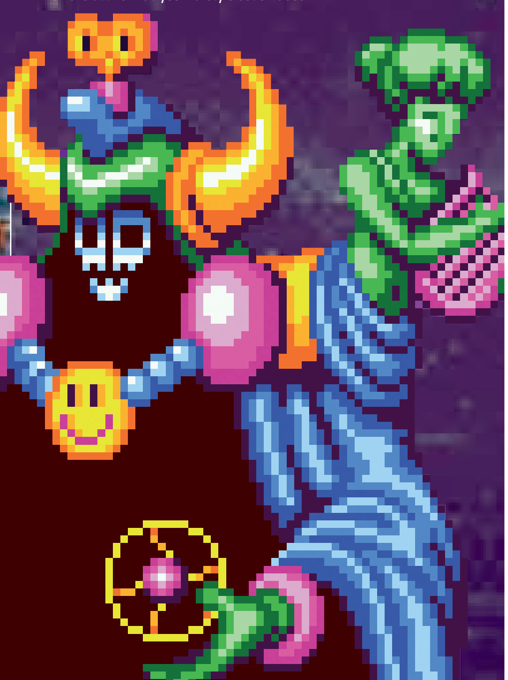
It becomes easy to compliment the game, and this constant stream of praise can seem baseless and even excessive if you haven't played through the entire thing, but it's so obviously a game that's come from a developer who knows how to create quality titles. It should never become shameful to proclaim the merits of something that stands out from a cartridge collection and tries so hard to please. It may sound like emotional gushing, the deranged words of one who has lost hold of impartiality and perspective, but sincerely, how can anyone still deny the status of *Dynamite Headdy* as a timeless and classic game?



» His head replaced by a giant chicken, Headdy is firing baby chicks at this Matryoshka-style set of faces



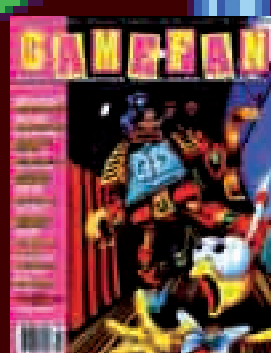
» Look! He's standing on a bopping-headed cow, and it's mooing. This game never ceases with being inventive and unconventional



THEY SAID:

"[IT] FEATURES A LEVEL OF DIVERSITY THAT IS TRULY UNPRECEDENTED. BRILLIANT NEW PLAY MECHANICS ARE AT YOUR DISPOSAL THROUGHOUT EACH LEVEL. HEADDY HIMSELF IS A GREAT CHARACTER. IN FACT, I BELIEVE HE IS MORE DESIRABLE THAN SONIC"

GAMEFAN VOLUME 2, ISSUE 10



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

GUNSTAR HEROES
SYSTEMS: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR: 1993

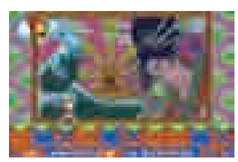
MISCHIEF MAKERS
SYSTEMS: N64
YEAR: 1997

BANGAI-O
SYSTEMS: DREAMCAST
YEAR: 1999



MEIN KOPF!

Another Treasure game, another strange power-up system (though strange in a wholly good way, not the bad kind of strange that might involve trash bags and ducks). At certain sections of a level you come across an ally called "Headcase" who dispenses power-ups – a selection of new heads which grant special powers (a bit like Worzel Gummidge really). There are a total of 18 heads which: transform you into a timed bomb; grant invincibility; cause double damage; shrink you down; shoot homing stars; create a shield of fireballs; grow climbing spikes; boost speed; freeze time; create three heads; vacuum up most enemies; shoot missiles; turn you into a chicken, biplane, spaceship; recharge energy through sleeping (this is quite dangerous in busy areas, since enemies can hurt you while sleeping); initiate the basketball bonus round; and finally a dangerous one called "Head Trip" which slows you down and stops any jumping.

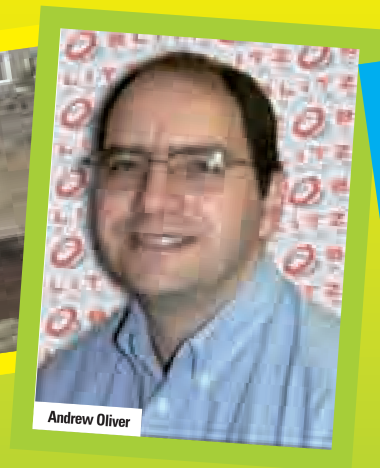


THE SPECTRUM LEGENDS

REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU LOVED OR LOATHED THE ZX SPECTRUM, THERE CAN BE NO DENYING THAT THE 8-BIT MACHINE REMAINS AN IMPORTANT PART OF OUR GAMING HISTORY. RETRO GAMER DECIDED TO TRACK DOWN SEVERAL CLASSIC SPECTRUM CODERS TO FIND OUT JUST WHAT MADE SIR CLIVE'S MACHINE SO WONDERFUL.













Q. What are your fondest memories of the days when the Spectrum ruled?

Simon Butler: There are almost too many fond memories from those days. Bargain games for a few quid that were better than a lot of the dross doled out these days. By 'better' I mean value for money, and enjoyment value. Also, making up the rules as we went along – that was fun. We had no one telling us how things should be done because no one had done it before. I suppose we were the 'avant-garde'.

Matthew Smith: The fact that arcades were flourishing gave home computer games a lot of their appeal.The newness of everything made us feel we could do things that weren't possible before.

Jon Ritman: That's a hard one. If I can only pick one moment, it has to be when I introduced my very first AI program to *Match Day* – a whole ten lines of code. The rules were a) If you haven't got the ball run at it and b) If you have got the ball kick it up the pitch. Bear in mind that I was bricking it at the idea of writing AI, and you may appreciate my tears of relief when it scored against me in the first ten seconds.

Philip Oliver: Checking the charts each week as we always had games in the top ten! On a personal front… taking a gorgeous girl I'd just met into WHSmiths to show her what I did for a living. I took her to the Spectrum games shelf, looked for a *Dizzy* game and picked it up to show it to her. As I did so, a kid standing there said, "that's a great game, you should buy that". She's now my wife, but I'd like to think it's not down to that particular moment!

Ste Pickford: Probably before I started making games [1986], when I was just a fan, saving my pocket money up to buy the latest Ultimate game. The games that stick in my memory are those that managed to frighten you. That's something that doesn't happen in games these days, and perhaps can't happen with the level of detail and realism we've got now. There isn't space to use your imagination so much in modern games, which is where the strongest emotions come from, in the same way that modern movies can never be as scary or spooky as old black-and-white films.

I remember being terrified by a head that appeared in a bush in *Tir Na Nog*. I'd been walking around for hours – getting nowhere in the game – when this floating head briefly appeared then disappeared. It scared me out of my skin. I never got to the bottom of it, and it might even have been a bug, but I felt I'd encountered a taste of the primal magic of the game world.

I remember a Hewson game called *Avalon* that had a similar effect. It was very ambitious in terms of the amount it tried to move around the screen and, consequently, a bit ropey, but its flaws added to its charm and I can remember fear as I ran between floaty walled rooms chased by monsters.

Elite was another game that had a strong effect on me where I was really caught up in the game world. Police ships were terrifying, and getting caught in witch space when going through hyperspace was a genuinely frightening experience.

Bill Harbison: My fondest memory was messing around with games that I had and changing the graphics. I remember typing out a *Donkey Kong* clone that was printed in a magazine and not being impressed with the graphics (basically guiding a mouse up ladders toward a piece of cheese). I decided to do my own, complete with chest-beating Kong. I even went as far as drawing the cover for the cassette box. I also hacked into *Rebelstar Raiders* and changed all the soldiers into space marines. It kept me off the streets.

PO: We developed a way of programming the Spectrum via an Amstrad CPC6128. The electronic device was called SPlink. It enabled us to write games for the Spectrum very efficiently. We had a disk drive for storage, had the source code stored and developed on the Amstrad and the object code running on the Spectrum and no cassette tapes – except when it came to mastering the final game.

SP: Many people have fond memories of *Feud*, but I enjoyed making the Amstrad graphics more than the Spectrum ones, so I can't say that one. I'd have to say the very first Spectrum graphic I ever drew for a game. It was my first day at Binary Design, aged 16, and I was assigned to a darts game that had just started. I was using my brother's 'sprite editor' program and I drew a large animated hand holding a dart based on my own right hand. The game, *180*, was good, and did well, and the animated hand was a unique to our game – other darts games used to light up each number or segment of the board in sequence, and you had to press a button to stop it on the number you wanted. Years later, I'd meet people in the pub who'd played *180*, and I only had to waggle my right hand at them for them to recognise it from the game.

"PROGRAMMERS COULD TAKE RISKS BECAUSE THE MONEY INVOLVED WAS SO LOW" JON RITMAN

Andrew Oliver: Every month would see new types of games released. It was a big time for creativity and originality.

David Jones: Just being able to write code when I felt like it and not having to worry about schedules or bosses. Knowing that if I thought a particular feature was amusing that I didn't have to justify it to a producer. At the time I didn't realise how valuable these things were, but I've worked on teams since then and nothing that I've been able to write as part of a team has come close to the level of reviews I managed when I was writing on my own.

Q. What has been your greatest ever Spectrum triumph and why?

Chris Stamper: In the early days we did almost everything connected with making games for the Spectrum. One of the greatest challenges was trying to find space in our already cramped office to store the latest delivery of tapes. At one time we estimated that we had over a ¼ Million tapes stored in our offices in Ashby-de-la-Zouch; they were everywhere in every room, from floor to ceiling, and even up one side of the stairs. We consider the fact that we orchestrated everything in those early days, and weren't buried alive by a mountain of tapes, to be a triumph.

SB: Though I only did the backstory, the character design and the poster design, I enjoyed my time with *Shadowfire*. I got a kick out of *NeverEnding Story* and *Hunchback: The Adventure*. I enjoyed my solo days with Ian Weatherburn, annoying though he was. We were a good team until his companion Roy Gibson reared his head, and then things went pear-shaped.

JR: *Head Over Heels* because it was so well liked and I still get fan mail thanking me for it – it was a lot of fun to design as well.

BH: *Chase HQ* was the most rewarding game I worked on, simply because technically it was superior to even the Atari ST and Commodore Amiga versions. Myself and John O'Brien [*Chase HQ* programmer] even received a fan letter – just one – from a very nice chap saying how much he enjoyed the game and offering his congratulations to us for doing such a great job on the conversion.

AO: It has to be *Dizzy*, but more specifically *Fantasy World Dizzy*, the third in the series. It was the last we made by ourselves. It introduced the family, had more story-like puzzles and tasks, and went straight to No 1 and remained in the charts for over a year.

DJ: I was pleased with the Windimation system as used on *Knight-Tyme*. I'd built in all sorts of tricks and data compression to cram more in to the game and as a result I'd been able to keep most of the 128K features on the 48K version.

Q. What's your favourite Spectrum game?

SB: There are far too many to mention. Obviously the Ultimate classics are there, but I liked *Chuckie Egg* and *Tir Na Nog*, *Zombie Zombie*, *3D Ant Attack*. It's actually impossible to pick one game and say, 'this one is better than all the others'. We were spoilt for choice.

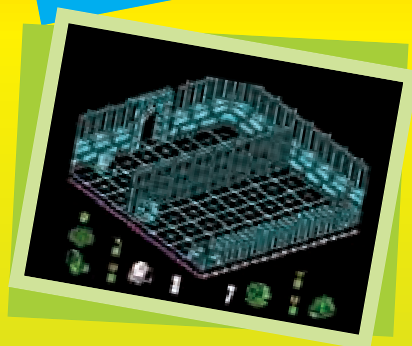
MS: *Elite*. Squeezing a galaxy into 48k is a remarkable achievement and I like the idea of flying my own ship. I've been an urban spaceman since I was allowed to stay up and watch the Apollo missions.

JR: Where do I start – I can't pick just one, so I will list a few: *Knight Lore*, *Spindizzy*, *Xeno* (I think it was called that) and *Ant Attack*. There were several more, but I suspect the brain cells that held their names died a decade or more ago.

PO: Once the Spectrum was out we spent most of our time coding, however, I do remember seeing the isometric 3D game, *Alien 8*, by Ultimate Play the Game and being amazed at what they had squeezed out of a Spectrum. We were leading coders at the time and just couldn't understand how they were doing it.

SP: Impossible to say – there were so many great games over the years. The games I played the most were *Penetrator*, *Elite*, *Knight Lore*, *Chuckie Egg* and *The Lords Of Midnight*, but there were dozens more.

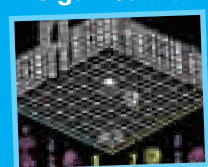




» If only *Head* had a laser gun for destroying this wall. The game would have been a lot easier…

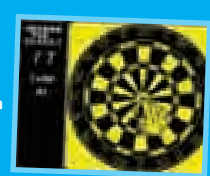
LOADING DISC ONE…

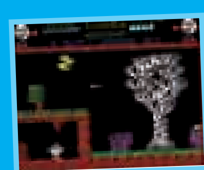
The games that made the legends famous



HEAD OVER HEELS (JON RITMAN)
While Ritman and Drummond had impressed the gaming world with their take on *Batman*, it was their amazing follow up that everyone remembers fondly. Filled to the rafters with incredible level design, some devilishly tricky puzzles and beautifully designed sprites, it's easy to see why Ritman is so pleased with the final product.

180 (STE PICKFORD)
While Spectrum already had its share of darts games, none of them placed you in control of a wobbly dart-throwing hand – until Pickford's *180* came along. Filled with fun touches (special mention goes to the pissing dog) *180* is an enjoyable game that's a lot better than it has any right to be. After all, darts games are supposed to be boring, right?





DIZZY (THE OLIVER TWINS)
While *Dizzy* wasn't the brothers' first title, it's easily their most important. While a little rough around the edges, *Dizzy* proved to be an extremely popular game that soon spread via word of mouth. By the time *Treasure Island Dizzy* was released, interest in the character was so great that it instantly went straight to the number one spot in the multiformat charts.

SHADOWFIRE (SIMON BUTLER)
Shadowfire proved an interesting blend of genres, and was like nothing else available on Spectrum when it was released in 1985. An icon-driven experience, you controlled six characters each with their own strengths and weaknesses. Beautifully designed and with a tight 100 minutes *Shadowfire* shouldn't be missed under any circumstances.



THE SPECTRUM LEGENDS

BITE-SIZE BIOGRAPHY OF A SPECTRUM LEGEND... PART ONE

THE OLIVER TWINS

The Oliver twins first began dabbling with games when their elder brother bought himself a Sinclair ZX81. The brothers eventually moved onto a Dragon 32, and after their first "type in" program appeared in an issue of Computer & Video Games they quickly purchased their very own BBC Model B. Their first game, Gambit, was published after the brothers won a competition on The Saturday Showthe 1984 and before long they had several games published and eventually moved on to the Amstrad CPC.

After creating several games for budget labels such as Players, the twins met the Darling brothers at the ECTS of September 1985. The collaboration with Codemasters lasted for many years, with *Dizzy* easily being one of the main highlights of both the brothers and Codemasters.

Upon leaving Codemasters in 1993, the brothers began freelancing for several big publishers including Acclaim and BGM before they eventually launched their own company, Interactive Studios, which is now known as Blitz Games.

CHRIS STAMPER

Christopher Stamper and his brother Timothy first formed Ashby Computers & Graphics Ltd back in 1982. Initially creating coin-op conversion kits – Chris had previously taken a job at a games manufacturers where he had repaired and created old arcade boards – the brothers soon began trading as Ultimate Play the Game and released hits such as *Jetpak*, *Psst*! and *Cookie*.

While the brothers continued to have hits with games such as *Sabre Wulf* and *Knightlore*, they were becoming increasingly unhappy and were looking for a change of direction and a way to get out of the 8-bit computer market, which was becoming dominated by budget titles from the likes of Codemasters and Mastertronic.

Unbeknownst to many in the industry, the brothers had picked up a Japanese Famicom back in 1983, and after working on the machine for some eight months, eventually set up a new company called Rare that would deal exclusively with NES games. After selling off Ultimate to US Gold, the brothers moved into new premises and also set up Rare-Coin-It in the US and went to work. Rare's first NES title, *Slalom* appeared in 1987 (co-incidentally, the last year an Ultimate Play the Game title was released) and in the space of six short years it had released nearly 50 titles.

After a close relationship with Nintendo, Rare eventually announced that it had become a first party developer and would make games exclusively for Nintendo. Despite finding great success with the *Donkey Kong Country* games on the Super Nes, it was the N64 where Rare really shone and it released hit after hit.

All good things must come to an end though and on the day after Rare's first and only GameCube title, *Starfox Adventures* was released, Microsoft announced that it had bought the Twycross-based developers for a cool $350 million. So far, Rare's output on both the Xbox and 360 have met with mixed reviews, but upcoming titles like Viva Pinåta and *Diddy Kong Racing* for the DS (an adaptation of its N64 hit) look like restoring Rare to its former glory.

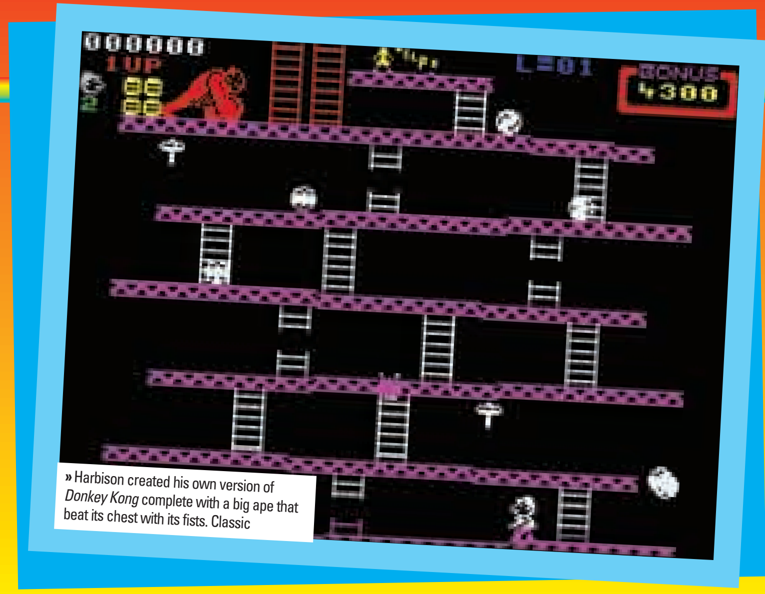
DAVID JONES

David Jones first became interested in computers when he discovered the Video Genie (a cheap Tandy TRS-80) in 1979. Intrigued by the possibilities that lay before him he immediately started coding games in basic. After being made redundant Jones decided to start working for himself and began programming for the Sinclair Spectrum, although he assembled all the actual code on his TRS-80 and transferred the data to his Spectrum, mainly because he wasn't a huge fan of the Spectrum's rubber keyboard.

A chance meeting with Albert Owen of Procom Software meant that Jones' first game, Bonkers, was eventually released in 1983. Two years later, and with Procom in financial difficulties, Owen suggested that Jones' new adventure, *Finders Keepers*, should be released under another software label.

The game was snapped up by Mastertronic and was an immediate success, selling over 300,000 copies. Jones soon got to work on a sequel and over the next three years he created three more titles.

Although he eventually moved over to consoles and worked for companies such as Psygnosis and Acclaim, Jones finally left the industry in 2002. While he's not shown any interest in returning, he has mentioned the possibility of a fifth Magic Knight game.



» Harbison created his own version of *Donkey Kong* complete with a big ape that beat its chest with its fists. Classic

BH: Favourite games would have to be *Elite*, *Match Day II*, *Hypersports*, *Highway Encounter* and *The Great Space Race* (only kidding – remember that one?).

AO: I was always fond of Ultimate Play The Game's back catalogue. Games like *Alien 8*, *Sabre Wulf* and *Knight Lore* were creative and very professionally put together.

DJ: That's a difficult question as I often spent more time writing than playing. I was writing assembly code before the Spectrum was launched so I didn't spend much time playing before I began writing for it. I played more games on my TRS-80 while I was learning to program. You might as well ask a plumber what his favourite plumbing installation is. Obviously I played all the well-known titles, but it was mostly to see what everybody else was up to.

MS: It placed a powerful machine in the hands of a wider audience than ever before. The rubber keys were an ergonomic boon.

JR: It was a period we'll never have again; programmers could take risks with game design just because the money involved was so low. Many unusual ideas were born.

PO: It was like a console, because it was cheap, standardised and very accessible, but it was a fully programmable computer. The combination got kids hooked on games and then many got curious and wondered what they could do with it. This became the starting point for many of today's games programmers and a great deal of the UK's leading industry talent & figures including Phil Harrison, Head of Worldwide Game Studios for Sony.

"DEAD-FLESH KEYS GAVE YOU THE SCREAMING AB-DABS, BUT IT WAS THE PLAYSTATION OF THE TIME"

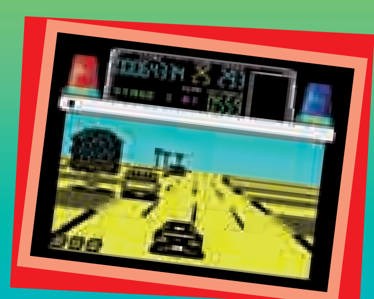
Q. What did the Spectrum contribute to the gaming world?

SB: Creativity and enthusiasm that has all but disappeared from the industry today. It spawned a generation of coders and artists who have gone on to some dizzying heights while others have just disappeared. It generated thousands of gamers who were passionate about games in a way that is missing with today's console titles.

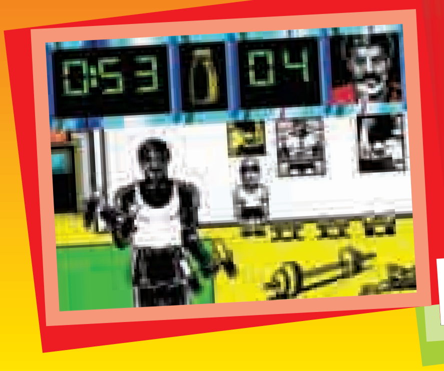
SP: Invention. It was a time when the world of videogames wasn't dominated by licences and sequels. Developers were allowed to create videogames rather than merchandise and promotional items for Hollywood and major sports authorities. There was an incredible outpouring of ideas and concepts because of this, particularly on the Spectrum because of its more flexible architecture.

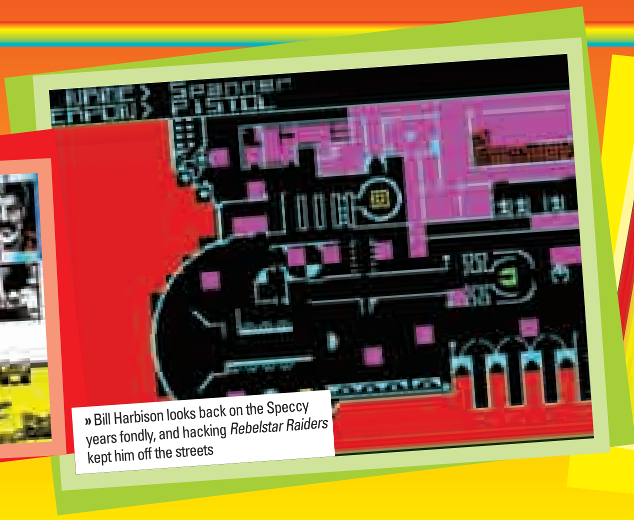
The Commodore 64 and the other American home computers had hardware features to help you make games – character screens, smooth scrolling, hardware sprites and so on. While on the face of it these features should make these computers better game machines, in practice they actually limited the range of games on those machines to only those suited to sprites floating over a scrolling character background.

Spectrum, on the other hand, merely had a bitmap screen and a processor. If you wanted to move a sprite or scroll the screen, you had to write the code yourself to do it. This had the advantage



» Quite possibly one of the greatest Speccy ports ever created and it's all thanks to Bill Harbison





» Bill Harbison looks back on the Speccy years fondly, and hacking *Rebelstar Raiders* kept him off the streets



of filtering out the worst programmers – many of whom ended up on C64 in my experience – as you had to be of a certain standard just to be able to move a sprite around the screen. It didn't impose any particular style of game, because nothing was easier to write than anything else. Sprites were hard, scrolling was hard, star fields were hard, 3D was hard – everything was equally hard.

Consequently, there were a massive variety of game styles, genres and graphical systems in use. I don't think any games machine has such an original, varied and interesting back catalogue.

BH: It contributed cheap home conversions of established arcade games and gave young programmers the chance to introduce hybrid genre games like the *Dizzy* series and the *Gargoyle* series including *Tir Na Nog*. They also brought fully 3D-shaded games to the home market ten years before the big consoles made 3D the norm.

AO: It created an environment where hobbyists could write games and sell them – something that we've sadly lost now. And it put Britain ahead in game development, as places like Japan and America never really had the same easy route from hobby to job.

DJ: Because of the limited graphics capabilities it was an ideal platform for developing gameplay, which is something that was missing in the first machines that came after the Spectrum.

Q. What was the most frustrating element of working with the Spectrum?

SB: Roy Gibson. Apart from that, I never got frustrated with the Spectrum. I loved it and still do now. It was my favourite machine and it helped me get into WAP game graphics 20 years later. I learned what I know about animation while developing for it and it gave me many, many happy hours of gaming fun.

MS: None that I can think of. I had mine slaved to a TRS-80 so none of the inconveniences affected me. The architecture of the machine was simple and well documented in the manual.

JR: Attributes!

PO: Cassette Tapes were very annoying! We always wished it was faster – but that's been the case of every computer in history! I wish Clive Sinclair had taken a royalty from all games produced like all consoles as this would have helped him stay in business and produce more cool games machines. Although the QL was flawed in so many ways – perhaps not!

SP: As an artist, the frustration was always with colour. Not only with the limit of only two colours per character square, but also with the limited palette of only eight colours – including black and white. All the other home computers could switch to more colourful modes, perhaps with bigger pixels but with more colours allowed in each character square, and a wider palette of colours. I used to dream of being able to draw something in orange. Another frustration about working on the Spectrum was using micro drives. The most unreliable storage medium ever invented. I used to have to draw every graphic in a game at least three times over the course of development because I'd lose files from the micro drives so frequently.

BH: The lack of colours on the screen and the low screen resolution. This meant that you were restricted creatively and unable to produce the quality of work you could visualise in your mind.

AO: Using the keyboard, and the tape drive. Generally people tried to write-to-write games on the Spectrum itself, which was very hard. If it crashed, you'd lose your work, and have to reload from tape. It was the few that hooked another computer to it. In our case, the Amstrad CPC, with decent keyboard and disc drive.

DJ: Very little. It had a very simple architecture and enough memory to write decent games. I'd be happy to write for it now if there was still a market for it.

"I WISH CLIVE SINCLAIR HAD TAKEN A ROYALTY FROM ALL GAMES PRODUCED AS THIS WOULD HAVE HELPED HIM STAY IN BUSINESS" PHILIP OLIVER

SB: I have nothing but fond memories of the Speccy. The colours, or lack of, was annoying, but overall it was my machine of choice when developing or gaming.

Q. And the most rewarding?

MS: Being able to produce high-res, colorful graphics was the best part, compared to other systems at the time. The first machine I saw was an Apple 2, which was out of the price range of most British people. It was also nice to know that Spectrum games did no harm to the Balance of Payments Defecit (British industry was collapsing at the time).

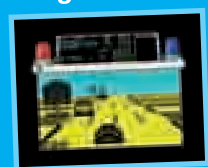
JR: Simplicity of dealing directly with the hardware and the freedom to avoid any sort of operating system.

PO: The success of the Spectrum meant so many people had games machines. Before the Spectrum only real geeks had computers; when the Spectrum came along even girls had computers!

SP: I used to work on multiformat games – for Spectrum, Amstrad and C64. The Spectrum version ended up being the main version – the version you wanted to play. Because of the technical difficulties

LOADING DISC TWO...

The games that made the legends famous



CHASE HQ (BILL HARBISON)
Along with *R-Type*, *Chase HQ* on Spectrum is one of the greatest coin-op conversions the machine has ever received. Boasting highly detailed visuals, wonderfully authentic gameplay and great speech (on the 128K version), *Chase HQ* proved that Sir Clive's humble machine was more than capable of mimicking a coin-op that cost thousands of pounds.

JETPAK (CHRIS STAMPER)
You never would have realised that this was the first game that the Stamper brothers released. Beautiful presentation, gorgeously detailed sprites and fast, frenetic gameplay all combined to create a dazzling debut that's still a dream to play today. Rumours persist of the game being updated and released for Xbox Live Arcade, but, so far, both Microsoft and Rare are keeping schtum.



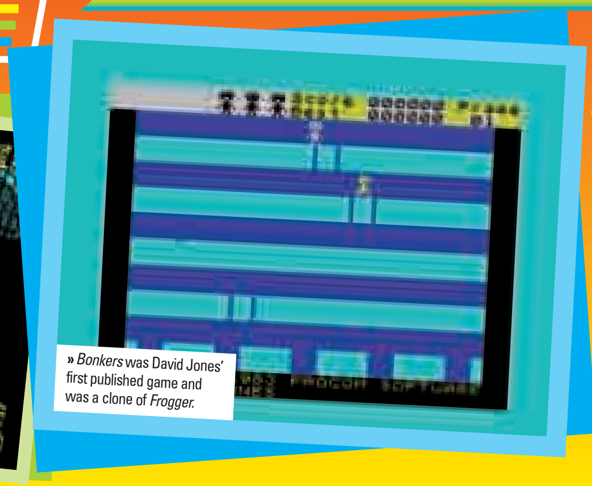


KNIGHT-TYME (DAVID JONES)
While this is the third game in Jones' *Magik Knight* franchise, it just so happens to be the very best (especially if you can track down the superior Spectrum 128K version). Boasting plenty of new characters, a diverse range of locations and an amazing soundtrack by David Whittaker, *Knight-Tyme* is a title that no Spectrum owner should be without.

THE SPECTRUM LEGENDS



» Not every game Simon Butler worked on was amazing, as *Highlander* proves



» *Bonkers* was David Jones' first published game and was a clone of *Frogger*.



of working on the Spectrum, it tended to attract the better programmers, so that was one reason, but the Amstrad was too slow, and the C64 looked crap with its washed-out colours. The Spectrum also had the nicest keyboard for playing games on. So for all those reasons the Spectrum version of the games I worked on was always the one I played the most.

"FEW OF US WERE RICH ENOUGH TO OWN THEM ALL AS KIDS, SO THE HOME COMPUTER WE HAD WAS OUR FAVOURITE" STE PICKFORD

BITE-SIZE BIOGRAPHY OF A SPECTRUM LEGEND... PART TWO

SIMON BUTLER

Since his introduction to the industry when he worked on his first title, *Pedro's Garden* (1983) for the ill-fated Imagine Software, Butler has worked on many titles across multiple formats. Games such as *The Neverending Story*, *Hunchback: The Adventure*, *Total Recall*, *Worms* and *Street Fighter Alpha 3* are to name but a few. He's worked for such publishers as Ocean, Team 17, Vicarious Visions, Probe, Magnetic Fields and Atari.

JON RITMAN

The legendary Ritman appeared on the scene in 1981 when he released his first game on the Sinclair ZX81, *Namtir Raiders* (his surname spelt backwards). He has created several games that were converted to other platforms such as the Amstrad CPC, C64, MSX, Amstrad PCW and Atari ST. His portfolio consists of classics such as *Match Day I & II*, *Head Over Heels* and *Batman*. He's worked for Artic, Ocean and Rare/Titus.

STE PICKFORD

Maradona had the 'hand of God', but Ste had the 'hand of *180*' – an animation he created for the darts game. His brother John and he have had a roller-coaster ride during their time in the industry, from forming Zippo Games and developing titles for Rare on the NES to being owned by Rare, moving to Software Games, and then leaving to form Zed Two (a nod to Zippo). In 2002 they had to sell to richer neighbours, but Zed Two closed in 2004. Last year, they formed Zee-3 and are self-publishing their games online as The Pickford Brothers.

BILL HARBISON

Another great mind from the Ocean generation, Harbison worked on the amazing *Chase HQ*, as well as *Daley Thompson's Olympic Challenge*, *Jurassic Park* and *Lethal Weapon*. From Ocean he moved on to Time Warner Interactive, Candle Light and finally worked for Warthog through a company called Platinum Interactive. After some unpleasant times, he spent a few years out of the industry only to return 18 months ago to Rockpool Games.

BH: Because there were limitations on the graphical output of the machine, it was all the more impressive if you managed to use the ink and the colour attribute to your advantage and create an attractive loading screen. I remember being in a computer shop when *Chase HQ* was released. I was stood behind two kids who were watching the game load in from tape and when the screen came up on the TV one turned to the other and said, 'Wow! That is one righteous loading screen.' That was funny and at least he could count.

AO: Getting things working really quickly. Although writing assembler is very slow, you could spend a day, and get something moving around the screen quite quickly. There were also lots of 'hacker' type tricks that would make things very fast. Things like 'self modifying code' – that really is a no-no, but in those days, if it worked, it was cool. And even in code, it felt innovative.

DJ: Well, there was plenty of money floating about for those of us who could write for it! Most rewarding though was seeing the reviews after I'd written something that I was pleased with and seeing that other people liked my efforts.

Q. Why do you think the Spectrum remains so popular with gamers?

CS: The gameplay. Once you got past the technical aspects of doing what you wanted and because the graphics, although simple, took a major effort to make them great, you simply honed the gameplay. What really made the games special was that a larger percentage of the overall effort went into this; it made for some truly great and imaginative games.

SB: Because it's British. I've no idea really. There just seemed to be a glut of games out there with hundreds more just waiting to be released every month. Crash was our bible and there never seemed to be enough space for all the reviews. With no Internet it was the only salvation if you needed a game tip or even better a map. It was small and black and sexy, and apart from the horrible dead-flesh keys, which gave you the screaming ab-dabs after a while – it was the PlayStation of the time. It kicked ass over C64 as far as I was concerned. There was a certain pompous attitude about Commodore development. Even though I did graphics for many C64 titles I preferred the Spectrum. You drew something, and if you were a halfway decent artist then it looked like what you intended. C64 graphics? Although he's one of my all-time favourite sprites, just look at Bruce Lee. I rest my case.

MS: It can only be the rubber keyboard. Seriously though, modern games have a sameyness about them. This is just a phase, as the current push towards physics acceleration will open up new avenues.

JR: It isn't. Just a few odd people think it is.

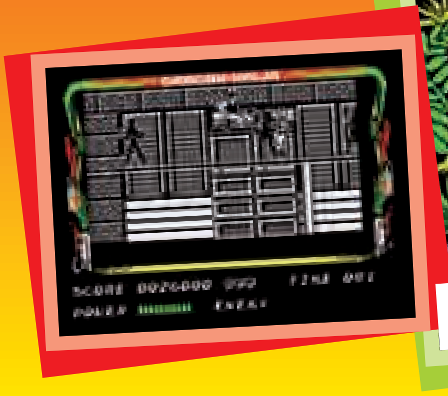
PO: It kick started the UK games industry and was 100% British from the quirky but brilliant entrepreneur Sir Clive Sinclair.

SP: Hmm. Nostalgia, I guess. It seems a pretty even split among people I meet – Spectrum or C64, with the odd Amstrad fan, and I've re-enacted the playground arguments in the office a few times. Very few of us were rich enough to own them all as kids, so whichever home computer we had was our favourite.

BH: It's because the Spectrum played such a big part in the lives of a whole generation of kids growing up in the Eighties and Nineties. It was there when they were growing up and we always look back rapturously on our childhood and how the sun was brighter and the grass was greener. It wasn't, but that's how we recall it.

AO: It created so many new original gamers and started up the industry, certainly for the British.

DJ: It has to be the gameplay because it isn't the graphics. Well done Sinclair for putting it out there with the colour clash and everything though, because if they'd waited to develop a non-colour clash machine it might have missed the market and we'd all have been stuck with the Commodore 64. I could write 6502 code as





» The superb *Sabre Wulf*, easily one of Chris Stamper's finest gaming moments



well, but I had the set up for Z80 so I'd have been behind on writing my games and might not even have got around to it.

Q. Do you think bedroom coders can still exist in the industry?

SB: They'll never get rich, but as long as they enjoy what they do, turn out quality product, and entertain people then that's all that matters. The bastards who wear the suits have all-but destroyed the UK game development scene and have ensured that the days of the bedroom coders or the cottage industry development teams are over.

MS: They can, and with the internet, there is no reason why they can't flourish, in my opinion. The mainstream media has a tendency to devote all its column inches and airtime to big PR stunts from the established giants, but the specialist press will always give independents a fair crack of the whip.

JR: While not actually programming in my bedroom, it's only a few feet away. There are a few left who tend to work on very small projects such as embedded games and mobile games.

PO: Very tough, but *Darwinia* is one of those rare exceptions that proves it's just possible. But what's better these days is that people can realistically choose making games as a serious career and there are many large professional companies that they can join to do so. And unlike the "bedroom coders" they don't need to be masters of multiple disciplines and risk everything!

SP: I hope so, as I've become one. I think the mainstream videogame industry has lurched too far toward making only slick, high-budget, blockbuster-type products, and hasn't encouraged enough original, lower budget titles to come through to provide the ideas for the blockbusters of the future. There are creative developers within the industry who can't express themselves as part of a 60-man team working night and day to draw a thousand new kits for *FIFA 2007*, or to program the gearshift simulator for licensed car #37 in racing game #58. The only option for these people is to leave the industry to do something more rewarding, or to make games as an 'Indie'. So many developers are turning to Indie development that I think Indies and bedroom coders are going to become an accepted part of the world of videogames providing the stream of new ideas we used to get from regular games in the Spectrum days, but which seems to be missing from the modern videogame industry.

BH: In some ways it's easier for bedroom coders with the introduction of the Internet. People can get the tools and resources they need, they can get advice on programming for all the way through the project, and when completed they can sell it direct to the customer. I don't think it's enough to make anyone a millionaire, but it can be a good living.

AO: It's difficult. The tools and platforms aren't really in place for it. It doesn't feel cool, when the market has so many huge, flashy games around. The gulf between what you can achieve on your own and what's in the market place seems too big. But, people must try, and we'd like to encourage that spirit to return.

DJ: No. Well, maybe, but they'd have to be clever as they would need to develop a lot more code to even get a simple game going. Maybe a company could produce a series of supported libraries that include a decent renderer, a resource system, external chipset interfaces etc. The best bet I see for a potential bedroom coder is to use Direct X to write the best game demo software they can and then use that as part of their CV to get in with a small development team.

Q. What do you think of the Spectrum games that are still being released by the likes of Jonathan Cauldwell?

SB: Unfortunately, I don't play any Spectrum games these days. I know precious little about the current Spectrum games, but friends who are 'in the know' tell me great things, so I suppose I should check them out.

JR: I haven't. I don't have a working Spectrum now but I do intend to get an emulator for my DS, and perhaps a GP2x if the pennies stretch that far.

"THE BASTARDS WHO WEAR THE SUITS HAVE DESTROYED THE UK GAME DEVELOPMENT SCENE; THE DAYS OF THE BEDROOM CODERS ARE OVER" SIMON BUTLER

JR: I had no idea.

PO: Sadly I had little time to play Spectrum games in the mid-Eighties, now I have a company of 175 staff and a family – I'm afraid I don't have any time! But if Jonathan is looking for a rewarding long-term career in a stable, friendly company of like-minded, skilled game developers he should get in touch.

SP: No, I've not played any of them. I think it's insane. The Spectrum is a difficult machine to write for, and incredibly limited. Why put yourself through the pain of making a Spectrum game now when you don't need to? If you're talented enough to make a finished Spectrum game, then you're talented enough to make a game that other people might play. Why hide away on a dead format?

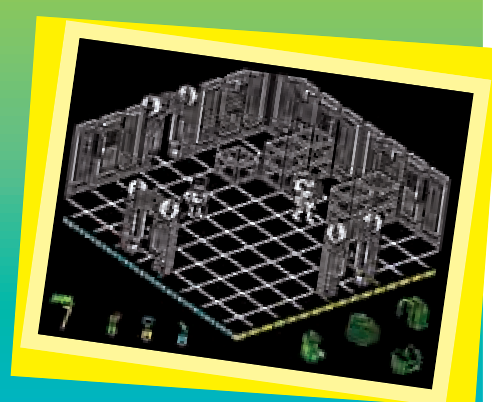
BH: I'd not heard of Jonathan so I decided to Google him. It looks like a lot of fun, but I'm not sure how popular it is.

AO: I haven't played any of them. Way too busy. I applaud people who make this kind of effort, and hope these people get jobs making games. Even though it's hard work in the games industry, it's cool going to work and being able to create new games, and although some of the originality has been lost, there's many things like Live Arcade that should help bring it back. We're feeling very good about how the quality of games is getting better all the time, and we're being compared more and more to Hollywood. But we can overtake films.

DJ: I wish them the best of luck with it and no, I haven't played them.

Q. What has been the defining moment of your career?

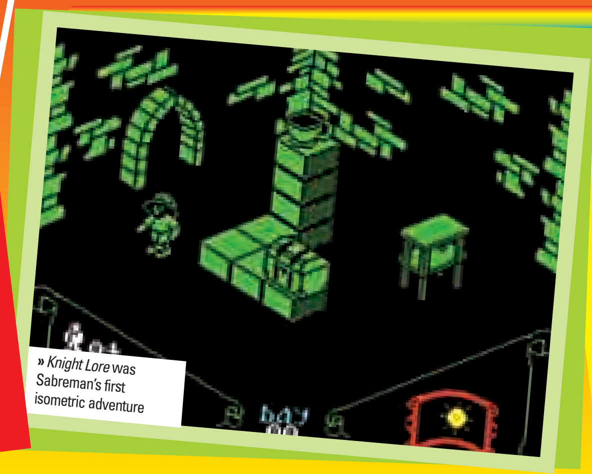
CS: I'm hoping that our careers aren't over yet, as we're currently working on some wonderful games, but there are many special memories, too numerous to recollect at this time, but with regards to the Spectrum, peeling the cellophane off the very first copy of *Jetpac* that we got back from duplicators, seeing it load, playing the game, and knowing that this was a real and saleable product was something I will never forget.



» *Batman* was the first game that Ritman worked on with friend Bernie Drummond

THE SPECTRUM LEGENDS





» *Knight Lore* was Sabreman's first isometric adventure





"I THINK I'VE MADE EVERY MISTAKE IT'S POSSIBLE TO MAKE. I REGRETTED THEM AT THE TIME, BUT REGRET FADES" STE PICKFORD

SB: I remember many years ago that Gary Bracey ran a computer store in Liverpool long before he became my lord and master at Ocean, and I called in with Ian Weatherburn to buy some blank discs. Gary's shop was cram-packed with kids, and he got me to autograph some copies of *Shadowfire*. While far from 'defining', it stuck with me. It was one of the first times I met Gary, and although it embarrassed me somewhat being put on the spot like that it made me realise that kids really enjoyed what I did for a living.

I recently got a job with a mobile games company working in France and the boss rattled off games I had worked on saying that I was one of the guys who was instrumental in him getting into the industry. Contrary to what my father always thought, maybe I haven't wasted the last 25 years of my life after all.

MS: It must be the excitement in the Bug Byte office when I brought in a half-finished *Manic Miner*, or maybe it was when I was in London receiving a Golden Joystick award. I have dabbled in other jobs, but nothing has ever generated this kind of enthusiasm and appreciation.

JR: *Match Day* – six months after a brief conversation with David Ward of Ocean (that I barely recalled) he phoned to say, 'that football game you were going to write, did you do it?' I then confirmed it was a couple of weeks from completion and he offered me a huge amount for it – well it seemed huge at the time.

PO: Yikes - that's a tough question. To be honest our success has come through lots of small steps over the last 25 years. Significant steps were getting hooked on *Pac-Man* ('81), Winning "The Saturday Show" ('83), Meeting the Darling Brothers ('85), as they were just starting Codemasters and *Dizzy*. After that we set up Blitz and everything has been planned and worked for, sadly no major lucky breaks, but we're still in the game! I guess we've been very fortunate to hire a lot of very talented and loyal staff that we now treat as "part of the family". More details of our early days can be found at www.OliverTwins.com.

SP: I hope it hasn't happened yet. I've never had a big hit game, and never made a lot of money, both of which I'm still working on. *Laughs* I'm still making games, and learning with every game I work on. The Pickford Brothers' latest game – *Naked War* – is the best game we've ever made, and I'm confident that the next game we write after that will be even better. I'm looking to the future, not the past.

BH: I think it was being invited with a few workmates to the press premiere of *Jurassic Park* at Leicester Square – it was certainly an experience.

AO: Probably having over ten UK number ones with Codemasters, and then setting up our own company.

DJ: I don't know really. I have a number of different careers. Maybe I'll knock out some more games and have a defining moment some time in the future. However, finding out from a member of the Crash review team that *Finders Keepers* would have been a Crash Smash (90% or greater overall review score), but that they were told to knock the review down to 89 ½ per cent because Mastertronic didn't advertise with them was very interesting. Sort of a defining moment, as I hadn't realised until that point that there was a certain amount of 'massaging' of the review scores based on the level of publisher advertising. It meant that I knew my review scores were always accurate or lower than they should be, but it also meant that I could take other high reviews with a pinch of salt if that publisher had a lot of adverts in that issue of the magazine.

Q. And finally, what was the biggest mistake of your career, if any?

SB: Probably not learning one of the many 3D packages out there. I wouldn't have bounced around the industry as much as I have, and would have had a lot more stability in my life. But I was a 2D guy back then and that's what I am today. I'm the last dinosaur.

JR: I should have started up my own company early and published myself.

SP: I can't really pick anything. That's not to say that I haven't made any mistakes – I have. I think I've made every mistake it's possible to make in this business. I regretted them at the time, but with hindsight the regret fades. Every mistake I've made has taught me something which has helped me later.

I'm pretty good at making games now, after 20 years, because I've learnt the hard way how not to make games. I've made mistakes in business and missed opportunities, but every mistake has led me to where I am today. Okay, I'm skint, but I'm making the best game I've ever made, and enjoying every minute of it, and I'm looking confidently to the future.

BH: Leaving the industry a few years ago after the local job scene dried up. I spent 18 months doing a proper job, and hated it. Thankfully, I'm back in the industry working at Rockpool Games in Manchester with a few of my old colleagues, some of whom I've known for over 18 years.



» A little game called *Match Day* proved the defining moment of Jon Ritman's shining career.

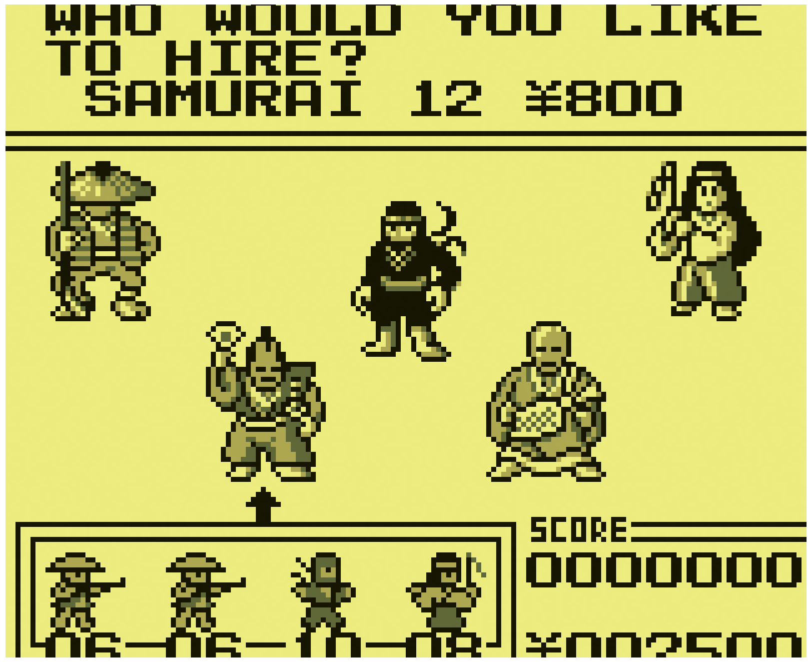
eMag

CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learned about retrogaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you actually want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Sapphire* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver. *Mercenary Force* costs less than a DVD of *The Seven Samurai*, but it has all the oriental action you'll ever need.



» Choose one of each, or maybe go for four of your favourite; figure out which combinations work best

MERCENARY FORCE

- » **SYSTEM:** GAME BOY
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **PUBLISHER:** MELDAC
- » **DEVELOPER:** LIVE PLANNING (LICENSED FROM LENAR)



» Deadly Ninjas and fearsome monsters; what more could you want?

You might saunter into Gamestation on any given day and spy a small grey Game Boy cartridge emblazoned with the words *Mercenary Force*, along with an image of a samurai. You've never heard of it, so you wonder, could it be a platformer? An RPG?

Mercenary Force is actually a rather 'Nam-tastic shoot-'em-up (yes, shoot-'em-up – the mechanics are unmistakable), which was released right across the world and, due to low interest at the time, is now incredibly cheap to buy. The reason for its brilliance (besides being as cheap as proverbial pommes frites) is twofold.

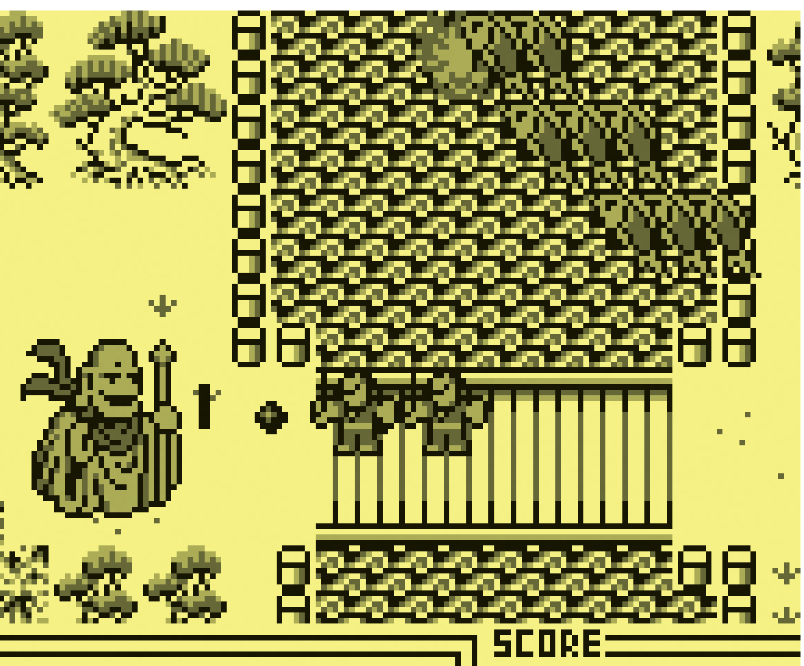
The first reason is that it shamelessly panders to just about every single clichéd Asiatic stereotype common in videogames. The entire game is a rollercoaster pastiche featuring everything associated with our Eastern born brothers that Westerners are fascinated with. The title screen alone is adorned with mystical devils, a ragtag group of mercs from the Southeast Pacific rim, plus plenty of Rising Sun symbolism. What follows is creating a team of four characters using any from a selection of five: Peasant Farmer (with rifle), Miko "shrine maiden" (resembling Sayo-chan from Kiki Kaikai), Buddhist Monk, and of course the requisite Ninja and Samurai! You can never make decent chop suey without samurai and ninjas in the mix. Throughout the game you'll encounter ethnic locales and enemies (Dragons! Tigers! More ninjas!), while your ears are serenaded by the finest 4-channel Asian chip-tunes produced by the GB this side of the Canton river. (Let the record show the game was developed by a Japanese company; we don't want any accusations of pigeon-holing going on here).

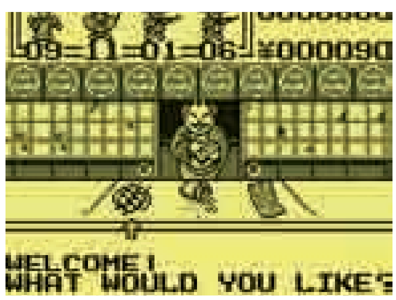
Secondly, not only is it a shoot-'em-up (a rather neglected genre on the underpowered GB, and so therefore a point of interest) but, it's a unique shoot-'em-up. While bearing a slight resemblance to *Gauntlet*, the strictly linear auto-scrolling and nature of enemies ensure its true nature can't be denied. Each available "mercenary" has a different method of attack – the rifleman slowly fires in a straight line; the Monk fires small lightning bolts diagonally, and so on. This allows for great strategy, since the four chosen characters can be put into different formations with the B button and their order changed with Select.

The aim is to find the right tactical combination of characters chosen, the order they stand in, and their formation. Do you go with a wall of Samurai who attack head on, or use diagonal shooting characters to attack enemies while avoiding their direct line of fire? The screen scrolls slowly but smoothly (working well within the limits of the GB's pea-green display), while enemies drop coins that can be used in shops to replenish health or buy new mercenaries at the stage's end.

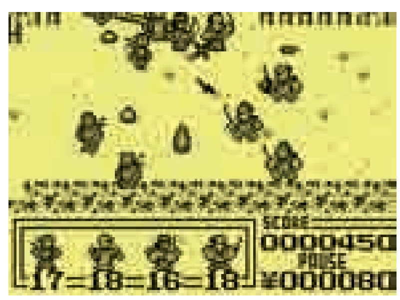
Mercenary Force may be short, but it has a surprising level of depth for a GB game. There weren't many (quality) shoot-'em-ups released for the system; you can't go wrong with one so cheap.

» Pushing both A and B buttons together sacrifices the mercenary at the front to perform a special kamikaze move



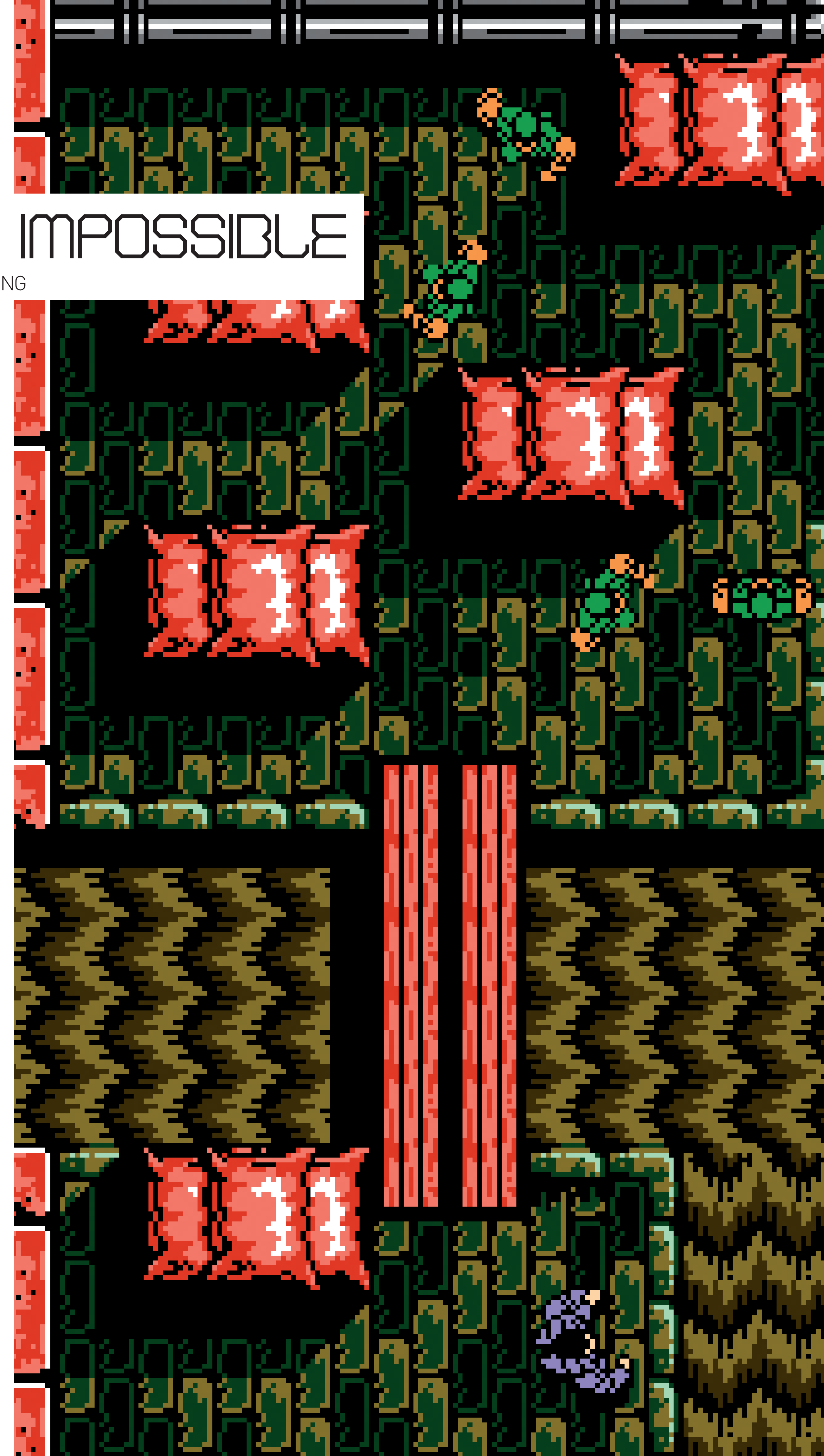


» Sushi and other items will heal the mercenaries you still have left. More can be bought at the level's end



» The action can get rather intense, keep an eye on the numbers at the bottom. These are hit points

eMag



MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

A MISSION WORTH ACCEPTING



- **PUBLISHER:** ULTRA LABEL
- **RELEASED:** 1990
- **GENRE:** STEALTH ADVENTURE
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NES
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+

HISTORY

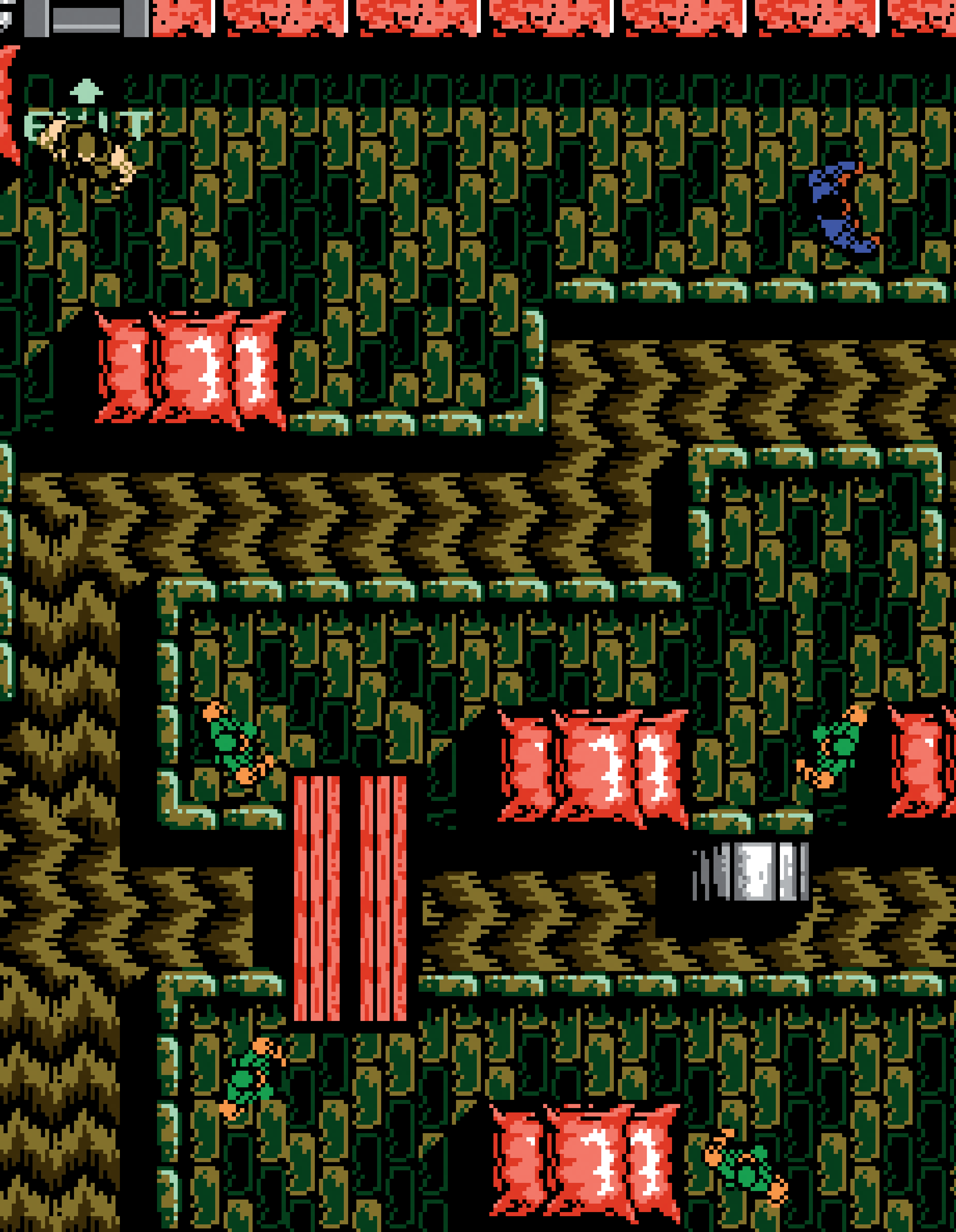


Mission: Impossible, an iconic piece of TV history whatever the era, be it the original Sixties episodes or the equally fantastic revival series of the late Eighties (though let's totally forget the so-so Tom Cruise films that came much later). The two series were like weekly slices of *James Bond*, and so the prospect of a game that could capture the show's charm elicited excitement.

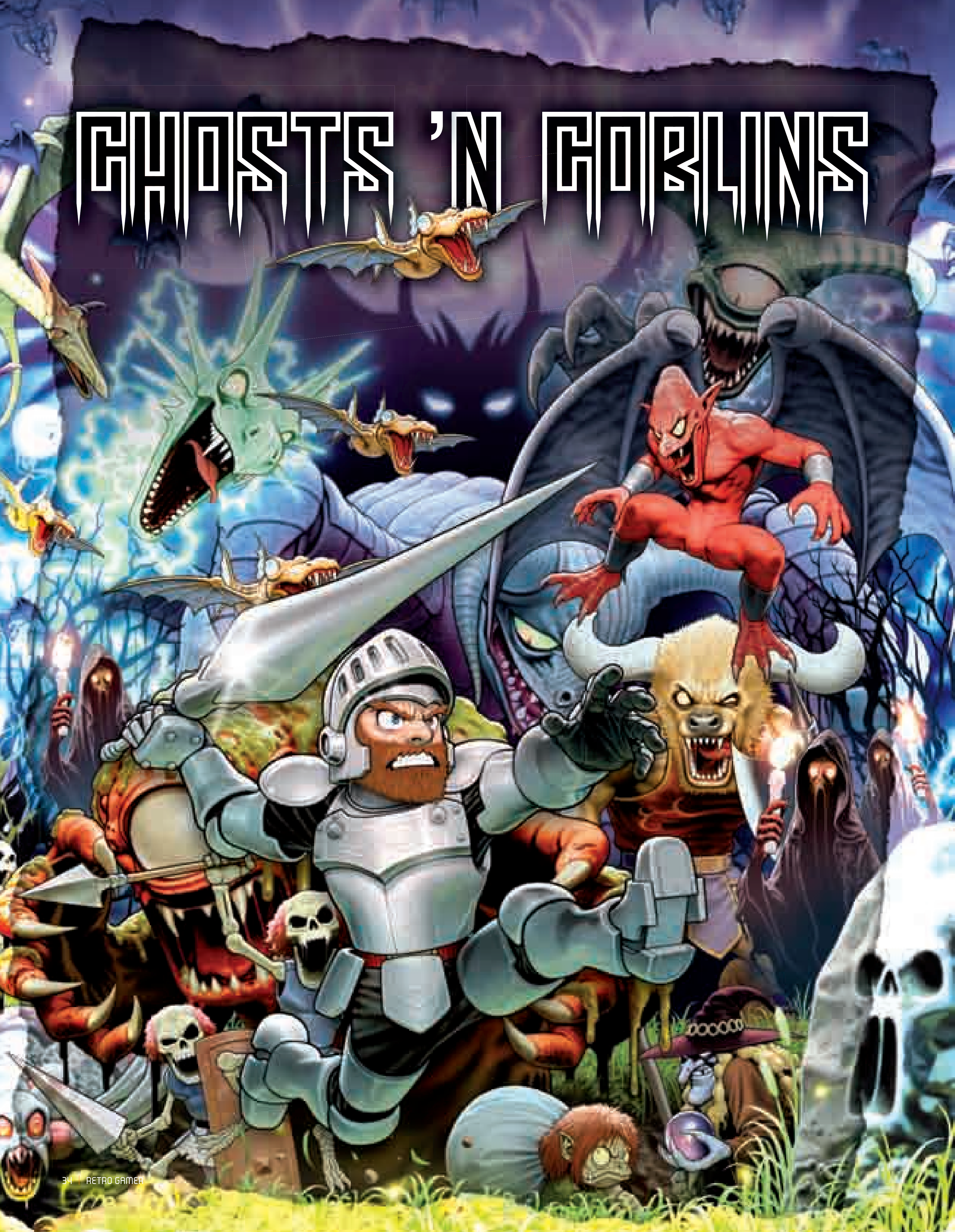
The NES game was released at the tail-end of (and based on) the revival TV series, which ended sometime in 1990. It was developed by Konami who already had experience with stealthy mission games in the form of *Metal Gear* – things looked promising indeed. Despite *Mission: Impossible* not having any obvious similarities to the aforementioned Konami title, it didn't disappoint and was a perfect antithesis to the plethora of all-action-no-thinking NES games available. It also perfectly captured what it was like, or at least what you'd expect it to be like, to be a group of MFI agents on a rescue mission.

Throughout the game you have control of three agents who can be switched between freely: the slow but dangerously powerful Max, with machine gun and explosives; the incredibly fast Grant who can decode locks but is useless at fighting; and Nicholas who sits somewhere in-between regarding speed and fighting, but has the useful ability to disguise himself as the enemy. All three of them need to be wisely used in combination for specific complex tasks, creating a varied mix of stealthy puzzles and total carnage spread across levels in Russian sewers, Venice's Canals and even the Swiss Alps.

It's a shame the game isn't better known since it was years ahead of its time and implemented several unique features; in some ways it was even better than *Metal Gear.* Incredibly varied and fun gameplay, precise controls, classic theme music, plus smooth scrolling all made this one of the best licensed games on the NES.


EXIT

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS





WITH A WHOLE NEW GENERATION OF GAMERS FINDING OUT THAT BEING REDUCED TO A COMEDIC PILE OF BONES IS JUST AS FUN ON A PSP TODAY AS IT WAS 21 YEARS AGO, SEAN SMITH TAKES A GOOD LOOK AT THE LEGENDARY GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS/MAKAIMURA SERIES, AND QUESTIONS TWO CAPCOM LEGENDS ABOUT THEIR MUCH-LOVED FRANCHISE...

These days, parents are terrified that their offspring will be influenced in a negative fashion by myriad atrocities found in the edgy, bloodthirsty, gangsta-themed videogame titles they somehow end up getting their mitts on. But back in 1985, this writer's parents didn't blink an eye after their wild-eyed son suddenly became obsessed with a hirsute knight in armour, who battled for the honour of his woman, generally while dressed in his shreddies. The knight was, of course, Arthur, and the semi-mythical King with whom he shared his name loosely influenced him. The girly-girl was Prin Prin, whose name is apparently an onomatopoeia for the sound made by a shapely female pair of buttocks. And the arcade game in which this motley crew first appeared, was Capcom's 1985 classic, *Ghosts 'N Goblins*.

Few who were around "back in the day" will forget their first impressions of the game. The tone that registered as you popped a coin into the slot, the introduction which sees an evil minion of Arthur's nemesis, Astaroth, snatch Princess Prin Prin away under of cover of darkness, and the classy miniaturised map that shows your route through the game – in hindsight these are all touches the likes of which Capcom became famous for. And by the time the still stunning musical score had kicked in, you just knew you were sampling a triple-A slice of JAMMA action, a true piece of gaming history.



» A fully tooled up Art ready to pop a lance in someone's ass, *Namco X Capcom*

Ghosts 'N Goblins/*Makaimura* (English translation: the deceptively cute Demon World Village) was the brainchild of one Tokuro Fujiwara, a young game designer who had worked on early Capcom effort *Pirate Ship Higemaru*, and would go on to help create other vintage fare, such as *Commando* and *Exed Exes*, before the brilliantly realised jaunt through Demon World became a reality. We were lucky enough to speak with Fujiwara, as well as his esteemed colleague Hironobu Takeshita, a veteran of some 14 years of production work at Capcom, including overseeing its flagship RPG series, *Breath Of Fire*.

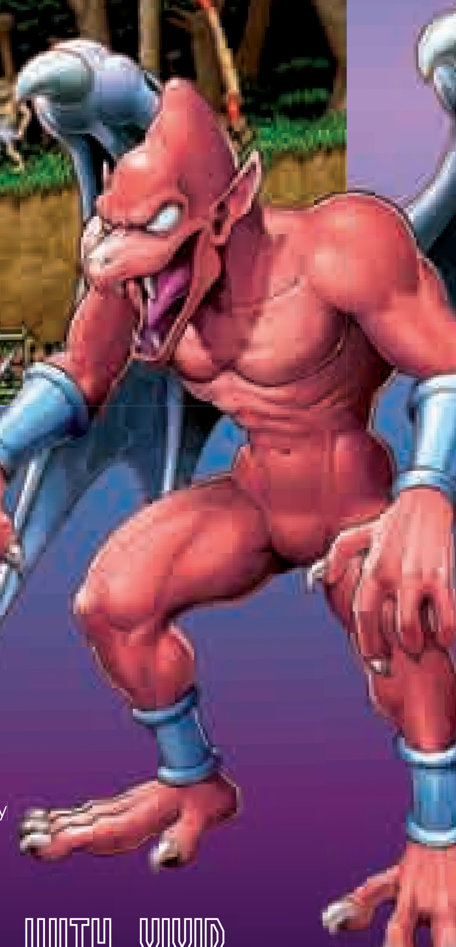
"*Makaimura* is a very special game for us, mainly because it marked the start of a brand new series", Fujiwara told us. And indeed, once people had sampled its delights, it was no surprise when this much loved outing went on to spawn three official sequels, and numerous spin offs; more of which later. Capcom's opening gambit, an eye-popping battle between a valiant knight and the forces of the undead, was essentially a standard scrolling platformer, however it was set apart slightly in that it wasn't afraid to dip a toe into run-'n'-gun waters, with Arthur using projectile weaponry that could be changed by collecting icons bequeathed by offing certain ceramic pot-clutching enemies. The weapons each had their strengths and weaknesses, which gave the gameplay a sharp, tactical edge. Super-rapid throwing daggers could be used for efficiently peppering enemies that required multiple hits; fiery torches



» So this is why my mother always told me to wear clean kecks

were generally avoided at all costs for their impractical, short-range napalm-carpet effect, whilst the axe was thrown in a slow, looping arc, great for those tricky flying foes.

The game itself looked wonderful, with vivid settings and detailed sprites that were brimming with characterisation; indeed many of the hellspawn Arthur was required to battle are instantly recognisable to gamers the world over

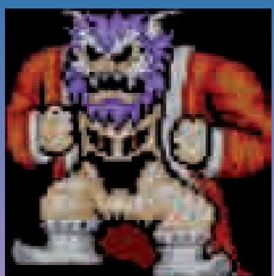


THE GAME ITSELF LOOKED WONDERFUL, WITH VIVID SETTINGS AND DETAILED SPRITES THAT WERE BRIMMING WITH CHARACTERISATION

GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS



"WHEN I FIRST BEGAN THINKING ABOUT THE SORT OF GAME I WANTED TO MAKE I IMMEDIATELY LOOKED BACK TO MY CHILDHOOD FOR IDEAS" TOKURO FUJIWARA



» He may have a face where most people have their, ahem, organs – but you wouldn't take the Michael

all these years on: the carnivorous plants that nonchalantly gob you to death whilst you're climbing precarious ladders; the crazy looking, plunger-firing ghosties that attack en masse in the forest section; and the scary, two-headed head main honcho himself – every enemy was rendered with a great deal of panache. Arthur himself is now a Capcom icon, his suit of armour and legs-akimbo, arms-aloft leap having graced numerous other titles as well as his own. Then you have the loveable, cheeky, skull-tossing red gargoyle encountered at the midpoint of the first level who would go on to play a much bigger part in gaming history than anyone



» You can't go anywhere these days without someone trying to sell you something



» The original game still looks stunning, be it the artwork or the sprites themselves





would expect… Fujiwara acknowledges their amusing, cutesy style, and hints toward his influences: "When I first began thinking about the sort of game I wanted to make I immediately looked back to my childhood for ideas – I imagined a game world filled with the sort of characters that had appeared in my favourite cartoons".

With enemies that differed in size, power and attack patterns for each level, the gameplay was frantic and for the most part almost impenetrably difficult. Whilst it was a joy to take control of Arthur, the relentless, unpredictable attacks and unforgiving do-or-die jumping sections meant that only the most hardcore gamers were able to progress to the later stages of the game without pumping a wallet full of coinage into Capcom's cab. Mercifully, Arthur was clad in a suit of armour that could withstand one hit before he was reduced, somewhat hilariously, to his undercrackers. Take any more punishment however, and our bearded hero becomes reduced to a wonderfully animated pile of bones, his skull resting neatly on top.

Fast-forward 26 years, and sit an eight-year old kiddie, already scarred by trying hopelessly to beat *Viewtiful Joe*, in front of this kind of onslaught, and it would be a surprise if they survived half an hour of having their ass handed back to them by Astaroth and co. It really is that hard. That said, it was and still is an extremely rewarding experience, and when you finally make it to the end and rescue the Princess, you can be forgiven for a certain amount of macho posturing, knowing that you have aced one of the most notoriously nails-hard titles in the pantheon of arcade gaming.

Insane difficulty is something that has become synonymous with the *Makaimura* franchise in general. This isn't necessarily a bad thing; most gamers are quick to recognise that the gameplay is compulsive, and doesn't ever become too frustrating. Controlling Arthur can always potentially provoke some colourful language or controller abuse, but you can bet your bottom dollar you'll be back later on to track down Prin Prin. Was this was a ploy to make more money from the coin-chomping arcade machines, or just a sign of the gaming trends of the time? "As I'm sure you can appreciate, Arcade games first and foremost do need to earn money, but this was not our primary objective," continues Fujiwara. "It was not easy for us to earn enough cash and still make *Ghosts 'N Goblins* difficult enough for the more skilled gamers out there. Personally I feel that the final difficulty level was indicative of the time."

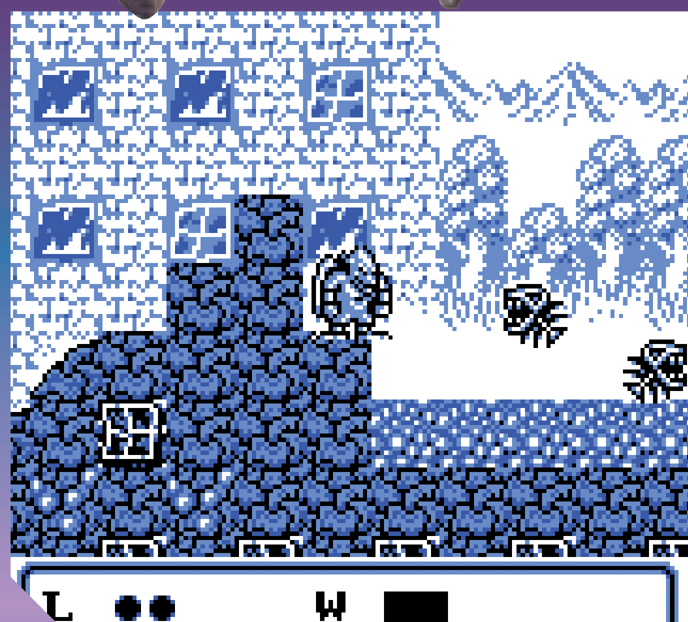
While the world waited patiently for a sequel, Capcom had licensed out *Ghosts 'N Goblins* to just about every home format imaginable, with varying degrees of success. The Nintendo Entertainment System was a fair effort, and sold well despite the fact that Capcom had raised the difficulty level to an







» Arthur faces off against the final boss in *Daimakaimura*. Wot, no Psycho Cannon?



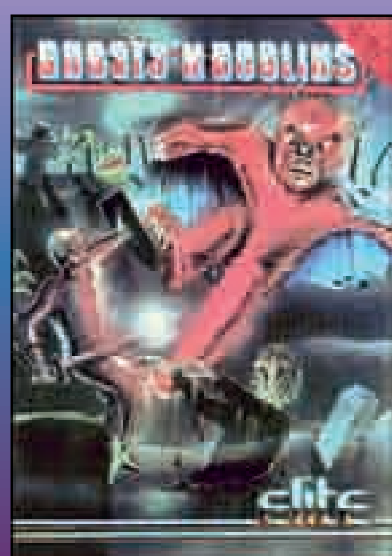
» The loveable fella at it again. This time on Game Boy

insane level, while the 8-bit home computers all got the conversion treatment, with each version standing out for different reasons. Lump together the gameplay of the Speccy, the graphics from the Amstrad and the cracking music from the C64 and you would have had probably the best arcade port of the time. Later on we saw more competent home versions for the Amiga, Atari ST and PC, whilst retro-heads on the move have been blessed with a Game Boy Color and even a Japanese mobile phone *Makaimura*.

Capcom gave us three years to master *Makaimura* before unleashing the sequel to astonished arcade goers in 1988. At this point the firm was slowly but surely honing its art and had produced some fine PCBs, such as *Black Tiger*, *Bionic Commando* and *Side Arms* on its older hardware, before introducing the Capcom Play System-1 (CPS1) board that very year. Debuting with *Forgotten Worlds*, the superior performance both graphically and sonically offered by the CPS1 was instantly apparent. *Daimakaimura*/*Ghouls 'N Ghosts* was the sophomore CPS1 release, and was instantly heralded as an improvement on the original, and a stunning game to boot. Arthur and his surroundings looked better than ever, with zombified grim reaper types being lanced into an impressive explosion of gore, leering vultures dissipating in a cloud of feathers, some awesome weather effects and boss sprites that made those in the original seem puny by comparison.

This was just the breathtaking first level and later stages proved to be just as impressive. Interestingly, Fujiwara's response was somewhat restrained when we mentioned that he must have been particularly proud of his work on *Daimakaimura*, to which he simply replied "I am personally very happy with the way *Ghouls 'N Ghosts* turned out, very happy indeed." We at Retro Gamer are betting he felt like a God on Earth, such is our respect for his superb creation.

Gameplay was tweaked and little additions made the whole package feel far more polished and involved then before. Arthur could now fire vertically, and as well as being able to collect weaponry from fallen enemies, the landscape was littered with a number of treasure chests that would erupt out of the scenery, some of which were hidden and had to be found by way of a well-timed jump in a certain place. In true series tradition they could make or break the player. Opening the chests with some well-aimed projectiles could mean one of three occurrences – the reward of a new weapon, some shiny new golden armour, or, if you have lucked out, an evil, hostile wizard who turned you into a wizened old man or a duck, thus leaving you wide open to attack. The golden armour, when collected, gave Arthur a chargeable "super" attack, which varied depending on which weapon was currently in his possession. These attacks ranged from a huge lightning bolt that cut a swathe both vertically and horizontally across the screen, to a spell that created a mirror-like clone of Arthur, effectively doubling his attack power. The addition of some extra weapons, and indeed the all-powerful new attacks, took the edge off the difficulty levels ever so slightly. That said, even the most battle-hardened games nutcases still find it tricky to negotiate the game in its entirety, particularly given the screw-job ending (see boxout). As with



» A nice conversion, which had some terrifying artwork

THE PRODIGAL SON RETURNS

Capcom was chuffed when Fujiwara returned to the fold to work on *Gokumakaimura*. He had taken a sabbatical with his own firm WhoopeeCamp, where he made the PSOne platformer series *Tomba!*/*Tombi!*. "With *Ultimate G&G* we have been very fortunate that Fujiwara joined us on this project. Fujiwara is the Director so his influence will be obvious for all to see", explained Takashita. But it could have been so different: "Initially Capcom and Fujiwara wanted to create a new game altogether, though it was finally decided to create a new *Ghosts 'N Goblins* title. It is a historic franchise and we felt that only with Fujiwara as the Director could we make a faithful sequel. And more importantly, Fujiwara wanted to create the title because there are lots of fans of the original game who have been waiting a very long time for a follow up to appear."



GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS





A KNIGHT'S TALE

Arthur has appeared in and even influenced other titles. He pops up as a particularly tough boss-fighting mofo in *DC Psikyo*/Capcom shooter *Gun Spike*/*Cannon Spike*, complete with space age suit of armour. He can even be called upon to deal out some striker-style punishment in *Marvel Vs Capcom*. When talk of a 3D *G&G* did the rounds on the cusp of the Noughties but came to nothing, it is believed that the idea eventually became *Maximo*. Takeshita acknowledges the fact that this may well have been the case: "The *Maximo* games were developed by a completely different team so it is quite difficult for me to comment. However, I don't think they were ever intended to be a spin off from the *G&G* franchise, but rather pay homage to it." Either way, the two budget *Maximo* titles are recommended to fans of the series, and, most importantly, do feel like they belong in Arthur's universe.



» 3D and PS2 but very much retro tinged romps. Get rummaging in those bargain bins



"FANS OF RED ARIIMAA WILL BE PLEASANTLY SURPRISED WHEN THEY FINALLY PLAY ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS. AS FOR WHETHER A FUTURE CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION WILL FEATURE HIM, WHO KNOWS" TOKURO FUJIWARA

its predecessor, the gameplay never felt unfair, and it rightly joins the likes of *Super Mario World*, *The Revenge Of Shinobi* and *Castlevania IV* among the greatest old-school platformers of the 16-bit, or any other era.

The musical score was equally timeless, with a horror movie-like crescendo building, then giving way to the perfect theme we all know and love. Fujiwara obviously had a fine understanding of the atmosphere he wished to create. "Usually with background music staff would create several 'rough' pieces and we would then choose those that most mimicked the levels and gameplay as they appeared in our mind. From this point we would then produce the final version for each level. The most important thing was fine-tuning the balance between tempo and sound effect, which definitely affected the gameplay," he explains. It obviously worked, as even today there are adults walking around now, in their late twenties who use "the *G&G* music" as their mobile phone ringtone.

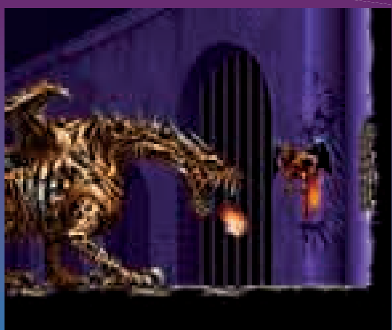
Rescuing Prin Prin from Loki was never going to be a pastime restricted to the arcades, and it found its way home, perhaps most impressively to the Sega Mega Drive, roughly one year after its release. Taking advantage of the similarity between the innards of the console and the CPS1 board itself, what ensued was a blinding port that would have sealed the deal for many prospective Mega Drive purchases in import shops around the UK. Superlative versions also popped up on the home computers once more, with a special mention going out to the C64 version, which had awesome Tim Follin-scored music. Conversions were also produced for the Sharp X68000, NEC Supergrafx, and Sega Master System.

Oh, and remember the little red fella who lobbed skulls at you in *Makaimura*, and pushed you to the limit in the castle section in *Daimakaimura*? He is invariably known as Firebrand in the West, or Red Arremer/Red Ariimaa in Japan. Well, in 1990, the crimson devil got his very own game. Fujiwara was involved in creating one of the most successful spin-offs ever imagined. *Red Ariimaa – Makaimura Gaiden*, or *Gargoyle's Quest* as it was known over here, was released on the Game Boy. An RPG-tinged platformer (imagine *G&G* crossed with *Zelda – The Adventures Of Link*) it went down well and remains one of the better titles for the monochrome handheld. An excellent sequel, *Red Ariimaa 2*/*Gargoyle's Quest II* was released two years later on the Famicom/NES. This sequel appeared on the Game Boy in 1993, and was known as *Gargoyle's Quest*

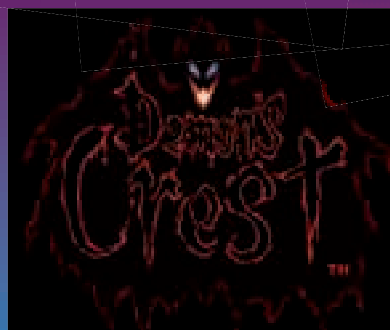


» The obscure 1999 Wonderswan title

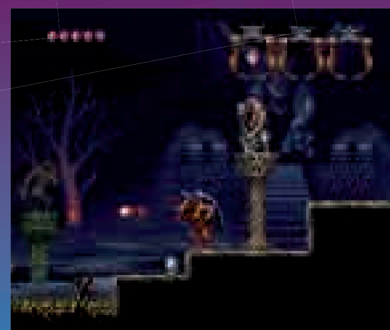




» The mighty Gargoyle's Quest immediately starts off with an exciting fight with a giant dragon



» *Demon's Crest*/*Blazon* – quite simply one of the best SNES titles. So what if you are skint? Buy it – now



» Red Arremer regrets eating that Peperami Firestick multipack

II – The Demon Darkness. The little red scoundrel was not finished there, however, as in 1994, the magnificent *Demon's Blazon*/*Demon's Crest* was released for the SNES/SFC. It took the role-playing platform idea maintained so well in the earlier titles, and gave the package a lick of paint and some 16-bit steroids. Red Arremer could now travel around on a Mode-7-fuelled overworld map between some beautifully dark platform levels. The resultant experience was critically acclaimed upon release, receiving some rave reviews across the board, yet sold poorly. Capcom's talismanic gargoyle went on to appear as a super-tough unlockable boss



» Bizarre game, but some brilliant cartoon artwork



» The solitary NES outing for the solo Arremer

in SNK Playmore's *SNK Vs Capcom: SVC Chaos*, and in the disappointing Japanese-only tactical RPG, *Namco X Capcom*, which also featured several other familiar *Makaimura*-centric characters. We mentioned to Takeshita that there are staff members on our magazine who would sell their grandparents for a sequel or re-release of the *Gargoyle* trilogy: "I think you and fellow fans of this character will be pleasantly surprised then when you finally play *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins*," he teases. "As for whether a future *Capcom Classics Collection* will feature him, who knows? You'll just have to wait and see…"

In the same way that *Daimakaimura* would have impressed many a gamer both aesthetically and as a great gaming experience when it appeared on Sega hardware, Capcom set out to achieve a similar reaction with the SNES exclusive *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts*/*Chomakaimura*, on the spanking new 16 bit Super Famicom in 1991. *Chomakaimura* was the best looking title in the series so far, and featured new weaponry, a whizzy new suit of armour that supercharged your projectiles whilst also allowing the obligatory charge attack, and all manner of stunning Mode 7 sprite scaling and tomfoolery. Musically the game was infused with gorgeous, orchestral arrangements that greatly enhanced the spooky atmosphere. The level designs were the most imaginative yet, and included the ubiquitous graveyard setting, a fabulous haunted pirate ship, the oesophagus of some horrible beast, and finally a showdown with the nemesis of the day and self-styled "King Of Hell", Sardius. Despite some slowdown in places, *Chomakaimura* completed a trilogy of absolute belters for Capcom and remains the most-loved game in the franchise.

Apart from an original effort for Bandai's ill-fated Wonderswan handheld, the originally titled *Makaimura For Wonderswan*, the only significant appearances since by Arthur and the gang have been in retro compilations for the Saturn, PlayStation, and current gen machines. The Game Boy Advance received an arranged version of the SNES game, which had bosses from the original game and the opportunity to play through redesigned levels. Naturally, it was extremely hard. Capcom also released *Arthur No Astaroth: Nazomakaimura: Incredible Toons* for the PSOne and Saturn in 1996, a joint effort with developer Dynamix, and a *G&G*-themed take on its own *Incredible Machine* puzzler. A 3D *Makaimura* was mentioned in the brave new world of the N64 but never materialised. The lack of decent underpants-clad action has now, thankfully, come to an end with the release of *Goku Makaimura*/*Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins*. Reviewed elsewhere in this issue, the PSP game has appeared as though Fujiwara has tapped into the minds of *G&G* fans with some kind of ESP that only games geniuses can use, to come up with an RPG-tinged future-retro classic. What was the secret? How did he… know? "Actually some of the ideas were loosely formed in our minds and then we sat down, discussed them and they became more concrete. During this process we listened to fans of the series and created elements based on their ideas."

Right – so does this mean we may have more of the same to come? "I think that the appeal of platform games is that they provide a unique gameplay experience that you do not get from any other genre. Looking ahead, we will aim to deliver platform games with even more quality."

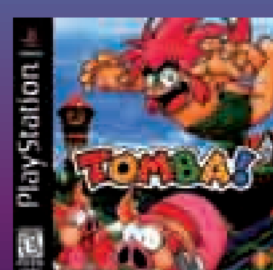
You can't say fairer than that.



» Until we had PSPs, *Super G&G* was the best looking game in the series, unquestionably

CRUEL TO BE...

Makaimura games: tough as old boots, right? Well that isn't all. Completing the main trilogy of games initially proves to be a futile exercise. Nail *Astaroth*, and you are sent back to the start and asked to complete the game again, on a harder difficulty setting, beating the final bosses with the crappy crucifix weapon. Obliterate Loki, and you are sent away to obtain the Psycho Cannon weapon then return for some more. While *Chomakaimura* sees you having to return for Prin Prin's bracelet, for gawd sakes. Were Capcom cruel to us, Mr Fujiwara? "We never thought that we were being cruel when we were making the series – rather we were reacting to the desires of strong gamers to deliver titles that challenged their skills. Games should never be too easy, but on the other hand it is important that they are not so difficult that players cannot make progress and become frustrated."



» Fujiwara's PSOne platformer. A little gem for fans of the platform role-player genre



THE CLASSIC GAME

ALIEN 3

An unstoppable hell with acid for blood that is crawling, slithering, along the edge of a deep space razor, and surviving. That's the dream. That's the nightmare and legacy created by HR Giger's Alien designs, subsequent series of films, and licensed videogames. Scream all you want, they won't hear you.



» In later stages the number and strength of aliens greatly increases, and, as you can see here, the air ducts become infested.



» Though infrequent, the cutscenes are perfectly recreations of the film.

IN THE KNOW



- » **VERSION FEATURED:** SNES
- » **DEVELOPER:** PROBE SOFTWARE
- » **RELEASED:** 1993
- » **GENRE:** ACTION/PLATFORMER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5

The majority of film-to-game licences are such garbage that it's now become a cliché: an in-joke among gamers which symbolises so much and revives countless memories of poor past purchases. But it shouldn't be this way, and occasionally, a film license of epic quality will actually appear. *Alien 3* on the SNES, and, specifically the SNES version, is not only a classic antithesis to all bad film licences ever released, but was a superb game in its own right.

Dusting off the connector edges and booting it up today reveals that *Alien 3* has aged incredibly well and is still as supremely playable as we remember. Most noticeable is that it actually controls more fluidly and smoothly than even some modern games; this is the key to why it's still excellent. Pushing down just once results in a permanent crouch and the ability to walk whilst ducking down. Alternatively you can run while standing and still be able to fire in all forward facing directions – each of the three weapons is mapped to a separate face button. Ladders can be grabbed in mid-air and disembarked at any point, while overhead railings are simple to grab hold of and allow firing in eight separate directions. Everything is easy and seamless. For someone being consumed internally by an alien parasite, not to mention actually being a woman, Lieutenant Ellen Ripley is quite the agile and dextrous vixen of small-bosomed-gun-toting destruction.

Graphically it also excels, with the exceptional level of detail and animation putting to shame some of the lazier 2D games which appeared on even CD based media. The subtle details create an amazing atmosphere very much like the movies, with drizzle battering against windows, mist and steam in the alien corridors, a heavy downpour in the muddy outside areas, and a smothering cocooned darkness whilst trapped within infested air ducts. The environments feel cold and gritty, enhancing the desperate struggle for survival against the orifice-probing Xenomorphs. These enemies too are incredibly well animated, screeching and hissing while exploding with visceral splendour. All of it helps to recreate the acid-dripping menace of the films.

Backing this atmosphere is a level of gameplay which was seldom bettered on the SNES. It's worth noting that this was exclusive to the SNES version, with the (admittedly fantastic) Game Boy version (by an unrelated London company) taking a top-down *Zelda* approach, and the prior released C64 version (later updated and modified for release on the Mega Drive, NES, Master System, Game Gear et al), adopting a much shallower and ultimately dire arcade style of gameplay. The SNES game was built anew and entirely from scratch, abandoning nearly everything found in prior releases bar the obligatory Alien Queen and cohorts.

Rather than the frustrating and totally separated stages found in the C64 school of design, the SNES title contained 6 major, non-linear, and massively expansive stages which could be explored freely. Best of all was the complete omission of any time limit; the entire game world (of each of the six stages) was there to be tamed at your leisure. In fact the levels are so large and sprawling, you're given computer terminals which provide detailed and intuitive blueprints for the entire prison complex. On these, every single point of interest (eggs, weapons, prisoners, and the rest) is noted for convenient access.

While other console versions limited the player to simply saving all prisoners within the strict time limit (a repetitive action which soon becomes boring), the SNES game had a wide variety of mission objectives to be completed within each stage. Along with the standard prisoner rescue objective, there were cooling pipes which needed

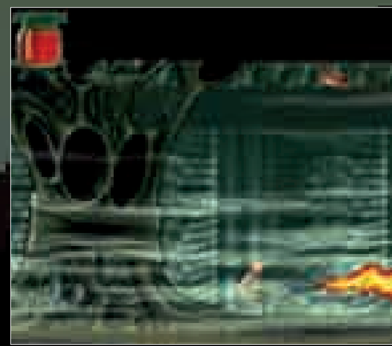


» The areas to explore are varied and large, though all of them contain aliens. There is no respite from the carnage.

"ALIEN 3 ON THE SNES, SPECIFICALLY THE SNES VERSION, IS A CLASSIC ANTITHESIS TO ALL BAD FILM LICENCES"



» Several missions, like the welding of these cooling pipes, involves the general maintenance of the prison.



» These slimy mist-filled corridors normally join two sections of the prison together – tread carefully.

welding, junction fuse boxes that had to be repaired, doors which must be melted shut (thereby permanently sealing the adjoining room), alien eggs to scramble, and a selection of other tasks. The objectives can be selected in any order and help to avoid repetition, while also easing the pain should any particularly difficult sections be reached. Simply play them in any order you want!

After years of experience playing games, when you look back on Probe Software's efforts with *Alien 3* it all looks so easy to create a decent film licence. Despite not following the film's plot precisely, coming across more as an amalgamation of the trilogy, this humble British company (yes, again the British isles show their superiority when it comes to games design) has done an amazing job with the source material. So why have so many others failed when it comes to translating cinematic offerings into interactive media? There are many subtle nuances in the SNES version of *Alien 3*, from the precision of the controls to tiny graphical touches, and it shows what a strong understanding of game mechanics the development team had, when tasked with using another person's ideas. Based on the technical limitations of the era, it's arguable that it couldn't have been possible to craft a better film-licence than *Alien 3*. If only all film licences, no, make that all games, had this much effort put into them.



» There are several outside areas to explore, and all of them are beautifully rendered like here.

THEY SAID:

"NICE GRAPHICS AND CLEVER ANIMATION HELP TO MAKE ALIEN 3 BOTH AN ENJOYABLE GAME AND A SPLENDID RENDITION OF THE FILM. HURRAH!"

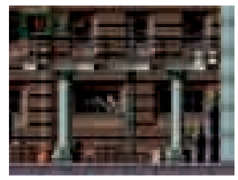
SUPER PLAY #9 JULY 1993





GUNS, LOTS OF GUNS

Admittedly the third film didn't feature any weapons at all, but that wouldn't have made for a very exciting game and so you're given three of the main weapons from the second film (*Aliens*). You've got your standard 10 millimetre M-41A Pulse Rifle, 99 rounds plus additional clips; a 30 millimetre pump-action Grenade Launcher, which has realistic bounce physics; and a flamethrower which comes in three colours. Red is the weakest, green is average, while the powerful blue flamethrower will cook just about anything in seconds. Sadly there's no shotgun or those massive body-rig guns they carried in *Aliens*, but the weapons available are ample for thwarting the Xenomorph threat. Pushing select also brings up a motion-tracker, which as long as you're not firing any weapons, is actually quite useful for avoiding tougher enemies. The image you see here is one of the many secret weapons caches you'll find.



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ROBOCOP 3
SYSTEMS: ZX SPECTRUM, C64
YEAR: 1991

STARGATE
SYSTEMS: SNES, GENESIS
YEAR: 1994

EXTREME G
SYSTEMS: N64
YEAR: 1997



Year Released: 1983

Original Price: £129.95 (16K), £169.95 (48K)

Buy it now for: £20-30 loose, £50-70 boxed and complete

Associated Magazines: Oric Owner, Oric Computing, Micr'Oric, Théoric, Oric User Monthly, CEO-MAG, Rhetoric

Why the Oric was great… You probably wanted a Spectrum but your Dad came home with an Oric under his arm, after the sales guy in Rumbelows convinced him it was the right computer for you. But following the initial disappointment, you soon learnt to love your Oric-1. It didn't matter what the detractors said, as you were the proud owner of a great machine with more that its fair share of decent games.

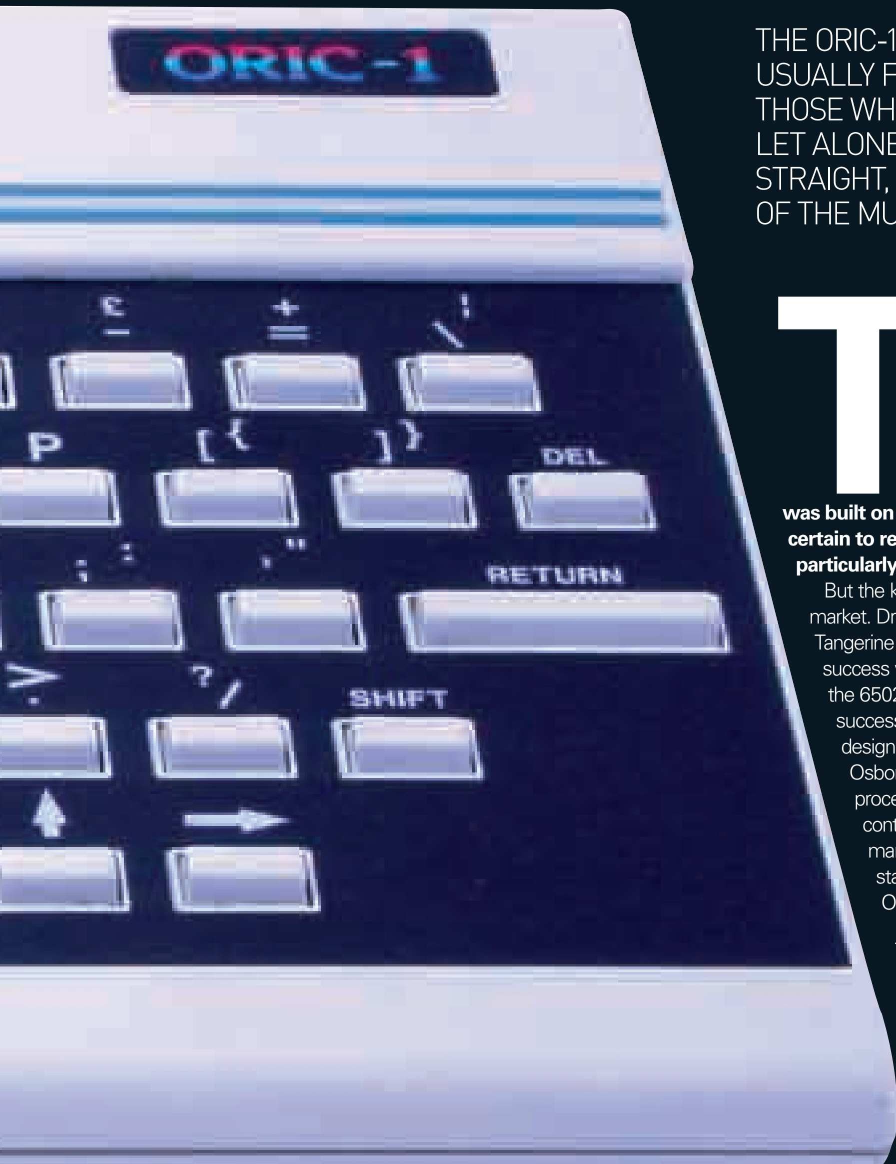






"SINCLAIR MAY HAVE PRODUCED THE FIRST MICRO TO BE SOLD FOR LESS THAN £100 (THE ZX80), BUT ORIC WAS DAMN WELL GOING TO BE THE FIRST TO ACHIEVE THAT DISTINCTION WITH A COLOUR COMPUTER"

ORIC-1



THE ORIC-1 HAS SUFFERED FROM YEARS OF UNDUE CRITICISM, USUALLY FROM OWNERS OF SUPPOSEDLY SUPERIOR MACHINES. THOSE WHO MOCK HAVE PROBABLY NEVER EVEN USED AN ORIC, LET ALONE OWNED ONE. IN AN EFFORT TO SET THE RECORD STRAIGHT, MARTYN CARROLL TRACES THE FASCINATING HISTORY OF THE MUCH-MALIGNED COMPUTER

The Oric-1 lived in the shadow of the Sinclair Spectrum. By the time Oric Products International launched the machine at a party in January 1983, the Spectrum had been available for six months with Sinclair unable to meet the huge demand, despite manufacturing 20,000 machines a month. The Spectrum was built on the success of the ZX81, and Sir Clive seemed certain to retain his grip on the UK home micro market, particularly the fiercely competitive sub-£200 sector.

But the key men behind the Oric-1 were not new to the market. Dr Paul Johnson and Barry Muncaster formed Tangerine Computer Systems in October 1979 and had some success with the Microtan 65, a kit computer powered by the 6502 processor. It was popular enough to spawn two successors – the Tiger and the Microtan 2. The Tiger was designed as a business machine to rival the Sirius and Osborne systems, and was to feature three different processors. The Microtan 2 was to be a low-cost, self-contained computer aimed at the low-end consumer market. The Tiger never progressed beyond the design stages, but the Microtan 2 evolved over time into the Oric-1, a computer to square up to the Spectrum.

TANGERINE DREAM

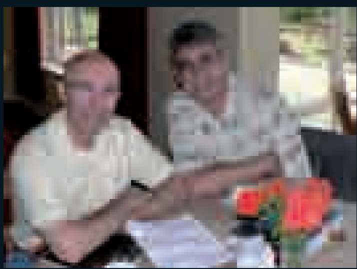
With financial backing secured (thanks to British Car Auctions), the design of the Oric-1 began in April 1982. Tangerine became Oric Products International, with Technical Director Dr Paul Johnson adopting the role of chief designer. He was assisted by Andy Brown and Chris Shaw, who were responsible for the ROM, Paul Halford who wrote the cassette routines, and Ian Redhead who helped with the hardware. Paul Kaufman, who ran Tansoft (the company's software arm) and also edited the Tansoft Gazette, wrote the sound handling routines.

Oric gave itself a head start by opting to use the 6502 as the machine's beating heart. It already had in-house experience of the CPU, having used it in the Microtan 65, and it also meant that existing Microtan software could be ported over. For the system specs, Oric looked at the Spectrum and identified its limitations. There was the 'zombie flesh' keyboard for a start. Instead of 40 rubber keys, the Oric-1 featured 57 plastic keys that moved individually. It couldn't be classed as a 'proper' keyboard, but it was hardwearing and friendly on the fingers. And then there was the Spectrum's non-standard one-touch

French connection

The Oric brand was surprisingly strong in France, with the Oric-1 and Atmos dominating the country's computer market. Around 50,000 Oric-1s were sold over there in 1983, and it was voted Best Home Computer in October of that year. Some truly excellent software was released by French publisher Loriciels, and the leading magazine Théoric stood head and shoulders above the UK offerings. So it was no great shock that following the collapse of Oric in the UK, the pieces were picked up by a French company. The new owners continued to sell the remaining Atmos stock, but their focus was the Oric Telestrat, an advanced computer aimed at the French market (it was designed to be used with the Minitel online network that existed in France). The Telestrat went on sale in September 1986 and hardly made an impression (the £400 price tag can't have helped). In total only 6,000 were sold, making it the rarest of the Oric computers. It you want a Telestrat then be prepared to dig deep – one recently sold on eBay UK for an impressive £250.

ORIC-1



» The two Pauls – chief Oric-1 designer Dr Paul Johnson (left) and all-round Oric good guy Paul Kaufman



» IJK Software was a prolific Oric publisher, responsible for a number of classic games including the *Xenon* trilogy



» Thanks to Tansoft, Melbourne House's epic adventure game *The Hobbit* was ported to the Oric, complete with colour graphics



» The official Oric Owner magazine (formerly the Tansoft Gazette) ran for 10 issues, with issue one given away with the Oric-1 when it launched



» Ocean was an early Oric supporter, releasing high profile arcade games for the young platform

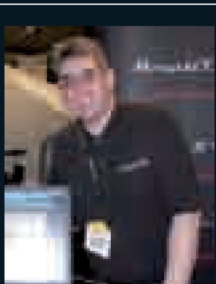
BASIC that often hindered rather than helped programmers. The Oric-1 was supplied with Microsoft BASIC, although it was 'extended' in-house with Oric's own commands, increasing it in size from 8K to 10K.

There were more ports on the back of the Oric-1 as well. If you wanted to connect a printer to an out-of-the-box Spectrum then you were limited to the virtually obsolete ZX Printer; you would need to buy an additional interface if you wanted to connect a different make and model. The Oric-1, however, boasted an industry-standard Centronics printer interface, which was handy. There was also an RGB socket alongside the usual RF modulator, allowing you to connect to either a monitor or TV set.

So far so good, but what about under the hood? How did the Oric-1's sound and graphic capabilities compare to the Spectrum's? Well you might be surprised. In the sound stakes the Oric-1 was superior, which wasn't difficult when you consider how weak the Spectrum's barely audible 'beeper' was. Oric fitted its machine with the popular AY-3-8910 sound chip. The same chip, which provided three channel sound, was later used in the Atari ST, Amstrad CPC, and perhaps tellingly, the later 128K Spectrum models. A number of useful sound commands were resident in Oric BASIC, giving users fairly broad control over the chip, and there were even some custom sounds – Zap, Shoot, Explode and so on: the perfect accompaniment to your own arcade games.

As with the Spectrum, the Oric-1 could generate two screen modes – standard text mode and a high-res graphics mode. Eight basic colours were available in both modes, and the total screen resolution was 240x224 pixels, which in text mode equated to a 40x28 character grid (characters were made up of 8x6 pixels, rather than the usual 8x8). Sadly, pixels could not be coloured individually (each row of six pixels inside a character block had to be of the same colour), so this led to slight colour-clash problems, but it was less pronounced than on the Spectrum. Uniquely, the Oric-1 used serial attributes, so only one memory area was required for screen graphics compared to the Spectrum's two. This reduced memory usage and increased the speed at which graphics could be displayed on screen. In short, it's the reason the Oric-1 was particularly suited to playing fast-paced arcade games.

Taking Sinclair's lead, the Oric-1 was made available in 16K and 48K flavours. Crucially, Oric looked to undercut Sinclair, with the 16K model retailing for £99.95, £25 cheaper than the 16K Spectrum. Sinclair may have produced the first micro to be sold for less than £100 (the ZX80), but Oric was going to be the first to achieve that distinction with a colour computer. The 48K machine would retail for £169.95, a fiver less than the equivalent Spectrum model – a smaller saving, but it was still enough to make people (and the press) sit up and take notice. A four-colour printer and an external 5.25in disk drive were also promised,



Paul Kaufman Q&A

As Editor of Oric Owner magazine, MD of Tansoft, and member of the Oric-1 design team, Paul Kaufman had a finger in a whole heap of Oric pies. These days he works for a music software company called IK Multimedia, but he's happy to talk about those heady days in the Eighties – indeed, he provided lots of vital information for this feature. We met up with Paul to ask him a few questions about his time at Tansoft…

Retro Gamer: Is it true you were offered a job by Tangerine after you complained about its customer service?

Paul Kaufman: It's true – I started out as a customer. I'd bought one of its Microtan 65 single board computer kits. I had some technical issues and had to keep phoning up to get help, but it was difficult getting info because Tangerine didn't have a full time support person. I kept complaining and one day I got a call asking if I would be interested in doing that job.

RG: And your role expanded?

PK: In an effort to get technical and product information out to customers, it was decided that an in-house magazine would be ideal, so I started putting together the Tansoft Gazette. And as there was no commercial software available at that time, Microtan owners were always asking for programs. So we decided to produce a few titles and it was logical to use the name Tansoft. When the Oric-1 was developed, we expanded the magazine to support it and started producing software (mainly games). So my little tech support function had grown into a magazine publisher and a software producer.

RG: How successful was Tansoft in the end?

PK: It took off massively. Sales grew so quickly that Tansoft was set up as a separate company, and as I was already doing the job of running it, I was made MD. We produced a wide range of titles – everyday people at home were sending in products for us to publish.

RG: Do you think the Oric-1 suffered from a lack of third-party software support?

PK: I think in retrospect we should have courted developers earlier, but the earliest machines were reserved for our own developers who were writing for Tansoft. My biggest success was convincing Melbourne House to convert *The Hobbit* to the Oric. That gave us a lot of credibility, as that game was massive.

RG: It has been suggested that game designers struggled to get to grips with the Oric-1. Would you go along with this?

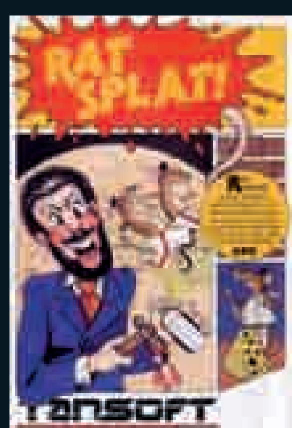
PK: The Oric was a pleasure to program and was very logical. I think most of the big developers concentrated on the competitor machines simply because they were already on the market, so they could guarantee reasonable levels of royalties. They were waiting for the Oric to reach the critical take-off point, which would justify them spending more time developing games for it.

RG: Which Tansoft games were your personal favourites?

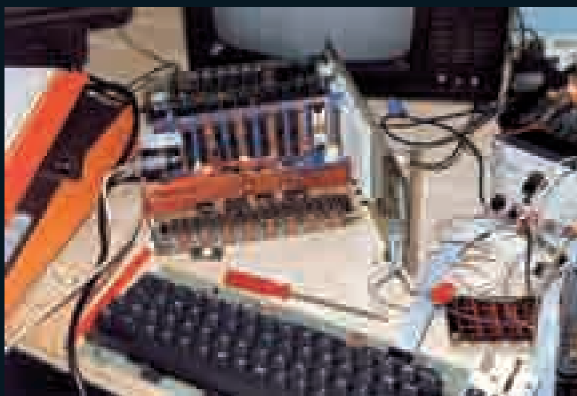
PK: Technically, *Defence Force* and *Ultima Zone* were excellent – both very high quality arcade games. *Oric Chess* was fun, simply because you could never win as it cheated! We got no end of complaints about that.

RG: Is that really a drawing of you on the cover of *Rat Splat*?

PK: Yes indeed it is me! We used a local artist to design our cassette covers, so who better to model a psychotic hammer-wielding rat murderer than myself? I subsequently shaved off my beard in shame.



» Paul was immortalised on the cover of Tansoft's *Rat Splat*. The resemblance is almost uncanny…



» A glimpse of the Oric-1 prototype, long before its innards were mass produced and stuffed inside a small plastic case

along with a £79 Oric modem that would allow users to access Prestel content. Sensing the buzz beginning to envelop the Oric-1, Sales Director Peter Harding proclaimed: "We're going to beat Clive Sinclair by offering much more for much less money." This comment came back to haunt him, as while Oric was indeed offering more for less, talk of toppling Sinclair would prove to be hopelessly optimistic.

BEST LAID PLANS

Oric had a great product and a competitive pricing policy, so what went wrong? In retrospect it's more a case of what went right, as

"THE ORIC-1 HAS ALWAYS BEEN SEEN AS THE SAD LAD OF THE 8-BIT PACK, BUT IT REALLY DOESN'T DESERVE THE RIDICULE IT RECEIVES. ON A TECHNICAL LEVEL IT WAS MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE SPECTRUM"

the Oric-1 launch was plagued with problems from day one. Initial interest in the machine was strong, with over 30,000 pre-orders received prior to the official launch in January 1983, but Oric failed to supply the machines on time. This was mainly due to manufacturing problems, in particular the delayed delivery of ROM and RAM chips. And when the machines were finally available around March time, Oric's mail order department struggled to work through the backlog. The 16K model suffered further delays, with a last minute revision of the circuit board meaning that it didn't appear until May, 12 weeks behind schedule. Worse still, it was priced at £129.95 – £30 more than originally planned. Thanks to the production and delivery woes, breaking under the £100 barrier was no longer on the agenda.

Then, when the hardware was readily available, there was a drought of commercial software during the summer. The games were out there – well-known publishers like Ocean, Durell and IJK pledged their support early on, and of course there was Tansoft – but retailers were sending thousands of cassettes back, reporting that they were faulty. Oric pointed the finger at Cosma Sales, its chosen tape duplicators, and Cosma Sales pointed it right back at Oric, claiming that the computer's cassette loading system was faulty. This echoed comments raised by magazine reviewers, who wrote of difficulty in getting games to load. It didn't help Oric's cause that faults in the ROM chip were already well reported, with Barry Muncaster admitting that Oric BASIC was bugged and a new ROM would be fitted inside all new Oric-1s leaving the factory. This never happened.

Smelling blood, Sinclair decided to stick the knife in. In May the price of the Spectrum was slashed, with the 16K and 48K models cut to £99.95 and £129.95 respectively. Its hand forced, Oric soon dropped its own prices to fall in line. Things started to look up. Sinclair had made its move and Oric was able to respond. The long-awaited colour printer was unveiled, available for £169.95 (no sign of the modem or disc drive however), and the profitable Christmas period was approaching. It was then that fate dealt its cruellest hand yet. In October, a fire ripped through the factory in Feltham where the Oric-1 was built, effectively wiping out the critical Christmas production. Manufacture quickly resumed in another factory, but stock was lost and the damage was done. Oric's aspirations had quite literally gone up in smoke.

COUNTING THE COST

The Oric-1 died in the shadow of the Sinclair Spectrum. By the time Oric announced that the Oric-1 would be discontinued in January 1984, the Spectrum had reached that magical one million sales mark. In comparison, it's estimated that around 160,000 Oric-1s were sold in the UK during 1983 – some way short of the 350,000 figure predicted by Financial Director Allan Castle.

Oric wasn't about to bail out of the market however. Thanks to £4million in funding provided by a company called Edenspring Investments, Oric pressed ahead with the Atmos, a new computer with a black and red livery and a proper moving keyboard. But beneath the improved exterior was the same old Oric-1 (albeit with an improved ROM). A high launch price of £170 took the machine out of direct competition with the Spectrum, pitting it against the Atari 600XL, Acorn Electron and C64. It was a battle it couldn't hope to win. Atmos sales were buoyant throughout 1984, boosted by a price drop of £50 prior to Christmas, but there were a growing number of debtors standing in line at Oric's door (the total debt stood at more than £5million). At the beginning of February 1985 the company called in the receivers.

Looking back, the Oric-1 has always been seen as the sad lad of the 8-bit pack, but it really doesn't deserve the ridicule it receives. On a technical level it was more than a match for the Spectrum, and had it not been for manufacturing problems, pricing issues and plain old bad luck, the machine would surely have made it into more homes. And anyone who questions its capabilities as a games machine needs to look no further than the later French titles or, indeed, the recent home-brew releases; the Oric-1 was able to cope with more than just first-generation arcade clones. It only enjoyed a brief commercial existence but it was not just another casualty of the Eighties computer wars. At the launch party mentioned at the beginning of this feature, Sales Director Peter Harding outlined the company's strategy for the future: "Sales of the Oric-1 will last for 15 to 18 months before being replaced by the Oric-2 with a typewriter keyboard, followed by the Oric-3." In the grander plan the little Oric-1 played a very big part.



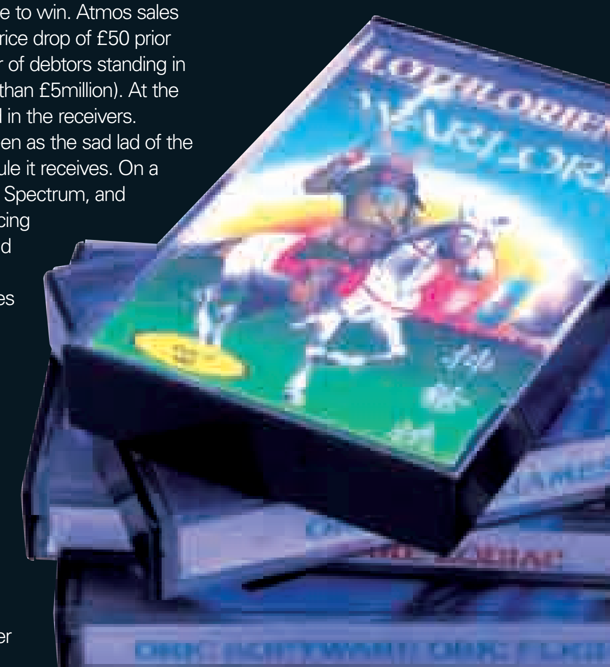
» Sadly this is just an early mock-up and not a limited edition green coloured Oric-1. We wonder how much this curiosity would be worth today?



» An early concept drawing of the Tangerine Tiger, a business machine that was dropped in favour of the Oric-1



» Over in France, Loriciels was the king of Oric gaming. It published *Doggy*, an early Eric Chahi effort, and the landmark graphic adventure *L'Aigle D'Or* (*The Golden Eagle*)



ORIC~1

PERFECT TEN GAMES

Thanks to their short commercial lives, the Oric-1 and Atmos are not home to hundreds of great games, so selecting ten of the best is not the thankless task it is with some machines. But as it's obviously subjective, we implore you to discuss and dispute these choices in a hearty manner on the Retro Gamer forum.



01

XENON1

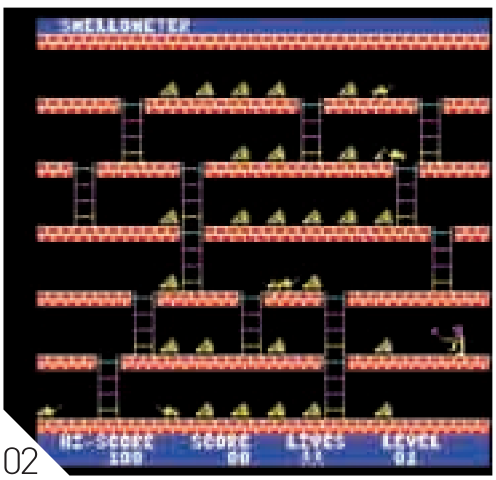
» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **PUBLISHED BY:** IJK SOFTWARE
» **CREATED BY:** JOHN SINCLAIR
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ZORGON'S REVENGE

01 **Not to be confused with the Bitmap Brothers' shoot-'em-up series, this is the first of IJK's *Xenon* trilogy for the Oric.** While the sequels (*Zorgon's Revenge* and *The Genesis Probe*) were multi-game affairs, the first outing is a straight-up, balls-to-the-wall blaster that plunders *Phoenix* without apology. Programmer John Sinclair can be forgiven however, as *Xenon1* stands out as one of the best versions of *Phoenix* ever released on any home computer. The graphics are large, colourful, and very well animated, whizzing around the screen with a fluidity not seen in many other arcade clones. *Xenon1* was easily the best reason to buy a (sturdy) joystick for your Oric.

RAT SPLAT

» **RELEASED:** 1983
» **PUBLISHED BY:** TANSOFT
» **CREATED BY:** JOHN MARSHALL
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** INSECT INSANITY

02 **This frantic platformer from Tansoft's is one of the best-known and best-loved Oric games, and with good reason as it's perhaps the finest pure arcade game available for the machine.** The graphics are not great – the main character looks like the stickman's ugly cousin – but the gameplay is ridiculously fun and fast-paced, as you run around a factory trying to flatten cheese-addled rodents with a mallet. To complicate matters there's also a weird monster on the loose, which you must repel with a handy aerosol; having to switch quickly between your means of defence leads to many hair-raising moments. It's completely mad, but a classic nonetheless.



02

INSECT INSANITY

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** MIRAGE
» **CREATED BY:** JOHN MARSHALL
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE ULTRA

03 **By the time John Marshall began work on his follow-up to *Rat Splat*, the UK Oric market was struggling and Tansoft was in trouble.** The anticipated sequel was therefore shelved, but thanks to the sterling efforts of Oric User Monthly, the game was raised from the dead and released through the magazine's software label, Mirage, in 1993. Not only was this the perfect present for faithful Oric fans, but it just happened to be a great little game too. Taking control of a boot, you have to jump around a hive, crushing bugs beneath your size nines. Like John's earlier hit, the frenzied gameplay more than makes up for the lack of visual polish.

DON'T PRESS THE LETTER Q

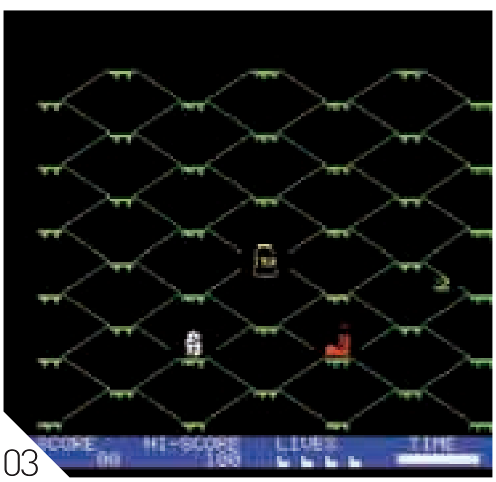
» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **PUBLISHED BY:** IJK SOFTWARE
» **CREATED BY:** ANDREW MOORE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** DEFENCE FORCE

04 **Forget the cheap and cheerless *Cascade 50* collection – if you wanted variety and spice on your Oric then *Don't Press The Letter Q* was a far better choice.** This overlooked gem caters for up to nine people and is a mini-game riot full of weird and wonderful mini-games. The challenges are all familiar as they're mainly clones of *Pac-Man*, *Space Invaders* and other arcade classics, but thanks to some bizarre character sprites and genuinely funny quips from the CPU (it seems to revel in your ineptitude), *Don't Press The Letter Q* plays more like a pastiche than a rip-off.

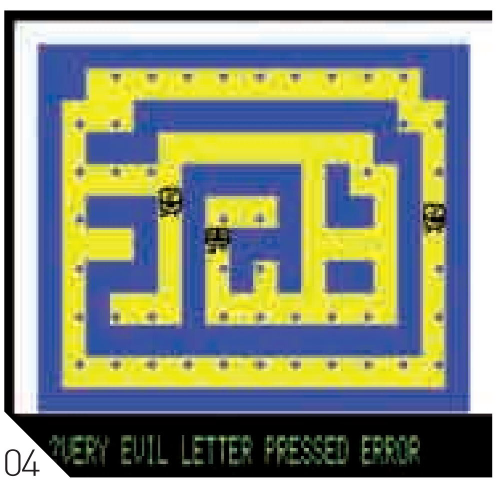
MR WIMPY

» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **PUBLISHED BY:** OCEAN
» **CREATED BY:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** HUNCHBACK

05 **Ocean's cheeky *Burger Time* rip-off is superb fun and features lovely brash graphics, zappy sound effects and suitably fast gameplay.** Playing as the Wimpy mascot, you have to first collect the ingredients and then assemble burgers while avoiding various kitchen nasties. It's repetitive and frustrating but madly addictive. Like *Hunchback*, this version of *Mr Wimpy* is vastly superior to the Spectrum equivalent, a sign that the Oric was arguably better equipped to cope with fast, vibrant arcade games. What a shame then that this excellent little Oric platformer never received a sequel of any sort.



03

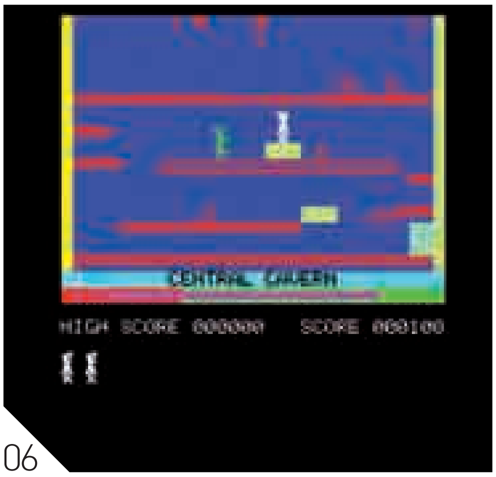


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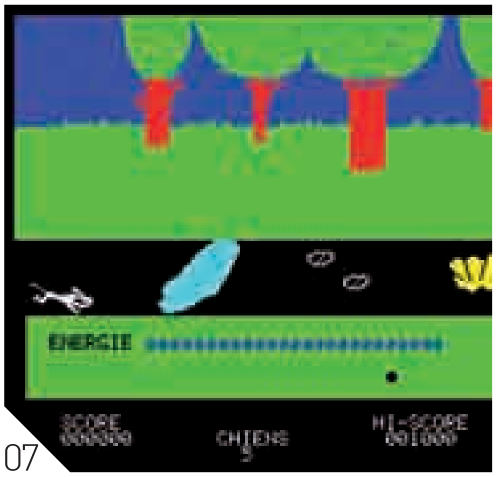


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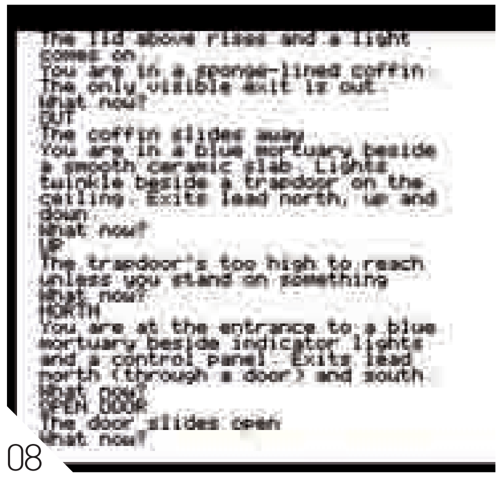




06



07



08

MANIC MINER

- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** SOFTWARE PROJECTS
- » **CREATED BY:** STEVEN GREEN (BASED ON MATT SMITH'S ORIGINAL)
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE FALL GUY (C64)

06 **Despite a lack of support from established publishers, the Oric was lucky enough to receive its very own version of Matt Smith's seminal platformer.** The port was fairly ropey, suffering from horrible squashed-up graphics, but what it lacked in looks it more than made up for in content. The Oric version packed in an extra 12 screens, taking the total to 32 and turning an already daunting challenge into an endurance test of epic proportions. In the school playground those 12 extra screens gave Oric owners rounds of verbal ammo to fire back at their smirking Speccy-owning pals.

DOGGY

- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** LORICIELS
- » **CREATED BY:** ERIC CHAHI
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** LE SCEPTRE D'ANUBIS

07 **Years before he created the masterful *Another World* on the Amiga, 17-year-old Eric Chahi honed his programming skills on the Oric's clicky keyboard.** He coded four commercial games for the French Oric market, with *Doggy* being the most accomplished by far. At first glance the game looks like the perfect program for kids, with a floppy-eared chien bounding about in a world awash with primary colours. But at its heart lies a fiendish arcade game as you attempt to guide your canine friend along a pathway littered with deadly traps and obstacles. Eric went on to better things, but *Doggy* is certainly not something he'd need to hide on his gaming CV.

SNOWBALL

- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** LEVEL 9
- » **CREATED BY:** THE AUSTIN BROTHERS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ADVENTURE QUEST

08 **The Oric-1 wasn't exactly blessed with the best keyboard, but this didn't deter publishers from releasing dozens of text adventures for the machine.** Level 9, the champions of the genre (in the UK at least), released its first five adventures for the Oric, the best of which is *Snowball*, a gripping sci-fi fantasy set aboard a deep space transport ship on a collision course with a planet. *Snowball* is text-only with no location graphics, but the strength of the descriptions, the sophistication of the puzzles and the sheer number of locations lifts it high above any fancy-pants graphic adventure. One for the purists.



09

L'AIGLE D'OR

- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** LORICIELS
- » **CREATED BY:** LOUIS MARIE ROCQUES
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MANHATTEN DEALERS (AMIGA)

09 **Text adventures are ten a penny on the humble Oric, but decent graphic adventures are far less common.** The best example is easily *L'Aigle D'Or* (*The Golden Eagle*), a stunning French game released by Loriciels. From the moment the game loads you know you're in for something very special. A picture of a creepy castle is seen, illuminated by occasional flashes of lightning. The atmosphere is carried into the game itself, as the castle interiors are depicted in pseudo 3D, with large high-resolution graphics. The main character is impressive too, and although he trundles about as if he's wearing concrete boots, it won't stop you from wanting to explore the castle's – and the game's – hidden depths.

PULSOIDS

- » **RELEASED:** 2002
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** CEO/RHEOTIC
- » **CREATED BY:** JOHNATHAN BRISTOW
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MAGNETI

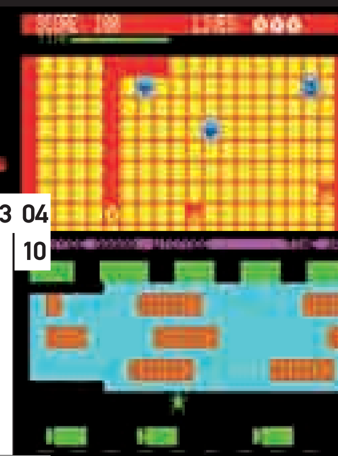
10 **It's almost as if someone has charged Jonathan Bristow (aka Twilighte) with single-handedly keeping the Oric software scene alive.** Like all the best home-brew titles, his sporadic yet significant releases succeed in pushing the hardware to its limits while still delivering very playable games. *Pulsoids* is a bat-'n'-ball game that builds on *Arkanoid* to the same extend that *Arkanoid* itself built on the original *Breakout*. In fact, if you compare the game to any of the early *Breakout* clones on the Oric you'll find it difficult to believe that they're running on the same hardware. The sound and graphics really are staggering. Visit Jonathan's site at http://twilighte.oric.org for loads more good stuff.



10

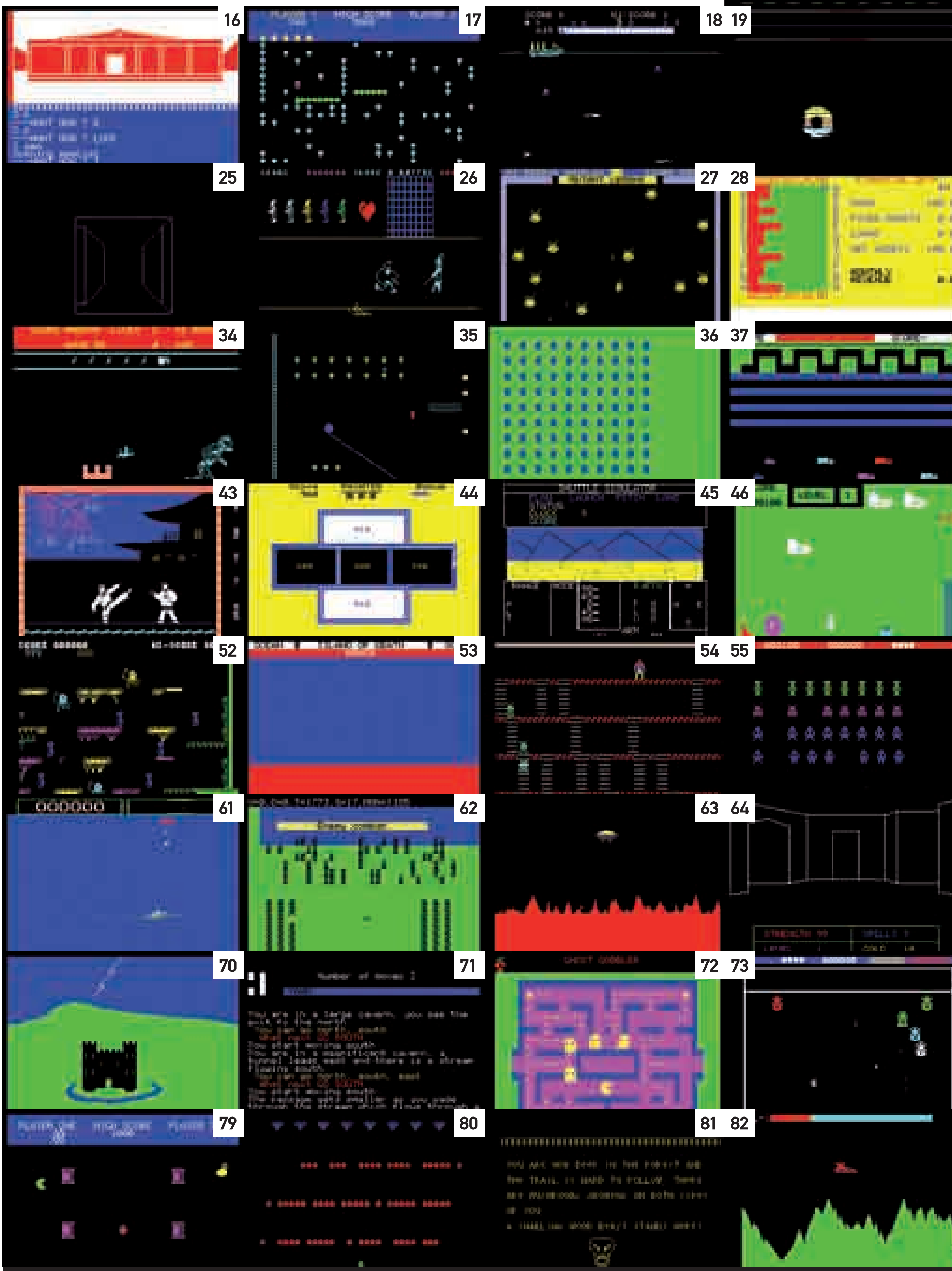




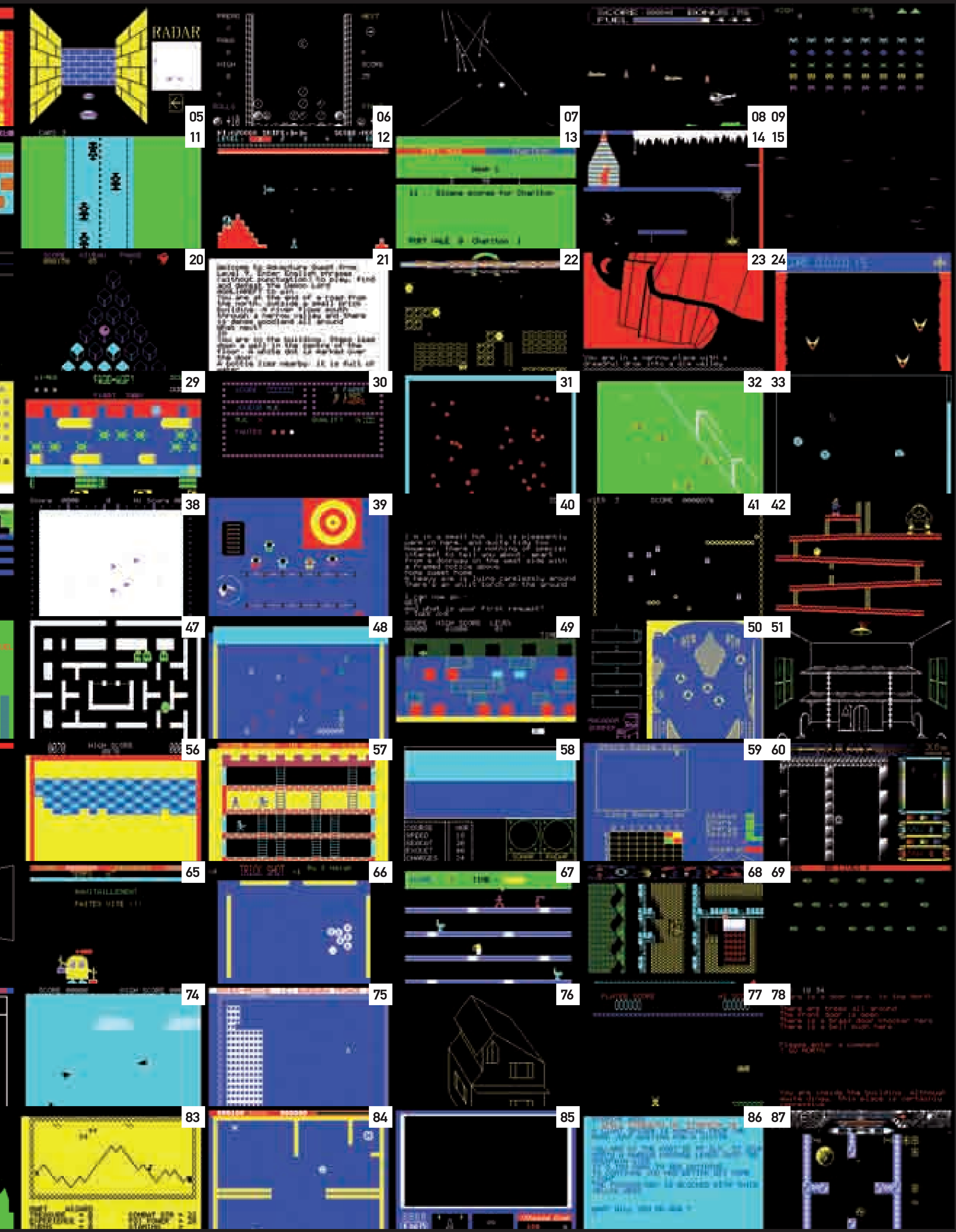


ORIC-1 and the rest...

Bring a little sunshine into your life by gazing at this wall of wonderfully garish Oric screenshots. Many of these games can be downloaded legally from www.oric.org. You will need to register your details with the site however.



01 HUNCHBACK
02 KEYS OF KRAAL
03 PROBES 3
04 QUAK-A-JACK
05 3D MUNCH
06 DON'T PANIC
07 ELECTRO STORM
08 FELONS
09 INVADERS
10 ROAD FROG
11 DEATH DRIVERS
12 KRILLYS
13 THE BOSS
14 ZORGON'S REVENGE
15 STYX
16 PERSEUS AND ANDROMEDA
17 MUSHROOM MANIA
18 SCUBA DIVE
19 FIRE FLASH
20 HU-BERT
21 ADVENTURE QUEST
22 ZIPNZAP
23 THE HOBBIT
24 SURVIVOR
25 TYRANN
26 LANCELOT
27 HELLION
28 DALLAS
29 FROG-HOP!
30 HYPER OLYMPICS
31 ATTACK OF THE CYBERMEN
32 FOOTBALL MANAGER
33 SUPER METEORS
34 ICE GIANT
35 ORIC FLIGHT
36 QUEST OF THE HOLY GRAIL
37 JOGGER
38 STARFIGHTER
39 TRIATHLON
40 ZODIAC
41 COBRA INVADER
42 HONEY KONG
43 KARATE
44 PAINTER
45 SHUTTLE SIMULATOR
46 SKRAMBLE
47 GHOSTMAN
48 ELECTRIC EEL
49 GREEN CROSS TOAD
50 MADACAM BUMPER
51 COCK IN
52 DAMSEL IN DISTRESS
53 ISLAND OF DEATH
54 PSYCHIATRIC
55 SPACE INVASION
56 SUPER ADVANCED BREAKOUT
57 DRACULA'S REVENGE
58 FRIGATE COMMANDER
59 TREK
60 ZEBULON
61 DEFENCE FORCE
62 WARLORD
63 SUPER JEEP
64 HELL'S TEMPLE
65 LE TRIDENT DE NEPTINE
66 TRICK SHOT
67 WATER PANIC
68 TIMES OF LORE [DEMO]
69 ULTRA
70 WAYDOR
71 FANTASY QUEST
72 GHOST GOBBLER
73 ULTIMA ZONE
74 HARRIER ATTACK
75 HOVER RESCUE
76 LE MANOIR DU DR GENIUS
77 ZEBBIE
78 HOUSE OF DEAD
79 PASTA BLASTA
80 GHOSTS AND GHOULS
81 LAND OF ILLUSION
82 LONE RAIDER
83 THE VALLEY
84 THEM: A PARANOID FANTASY
85 SAGA
86 VELNOR'S LAIR
87 MAGNETIX


RADAR
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SPLATTERHOUSE 2

JOURNEY TO HELL ONCE MORE



- » **PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** SPLATTER-'EM-UP
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3

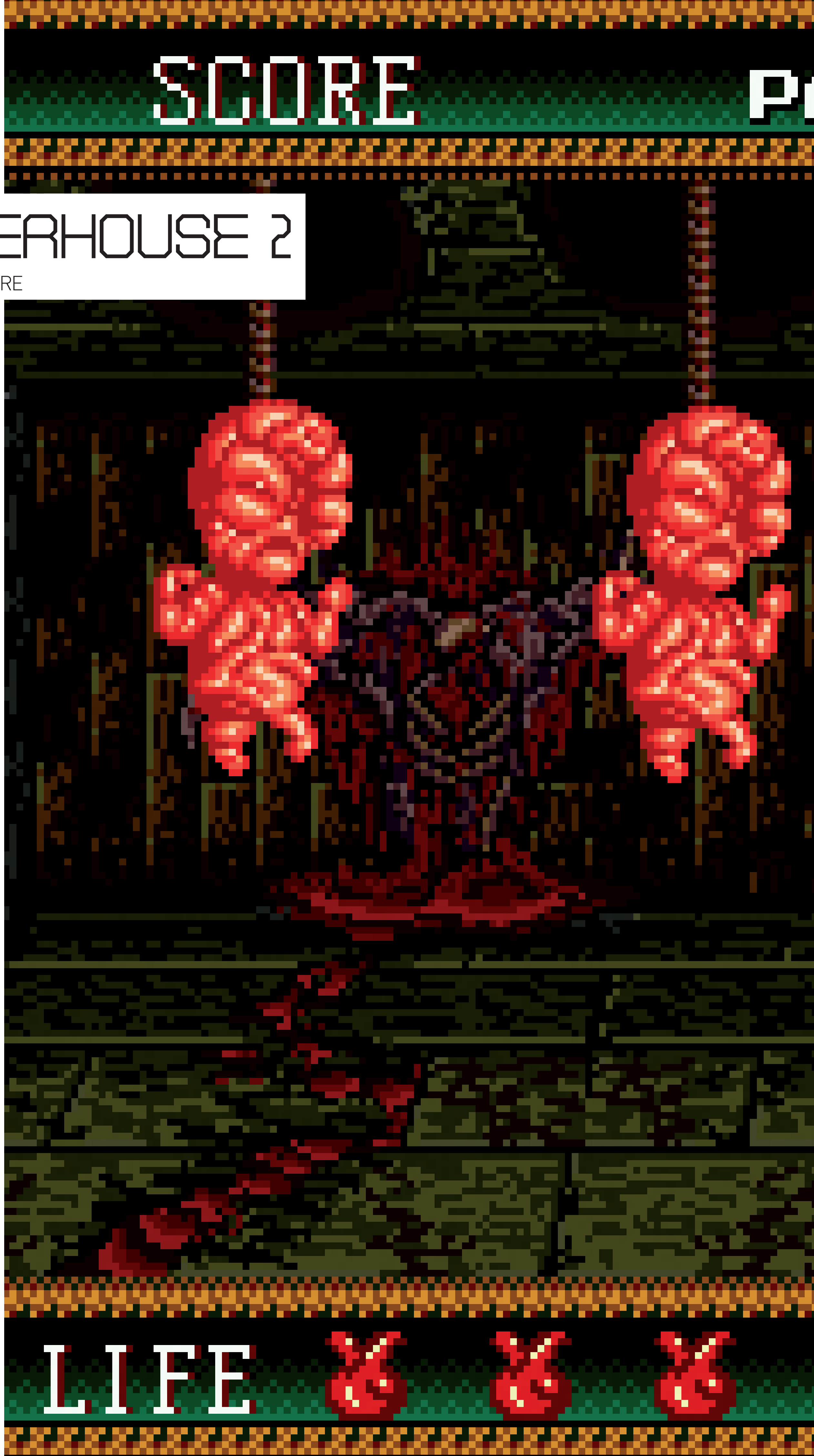
HISTORY

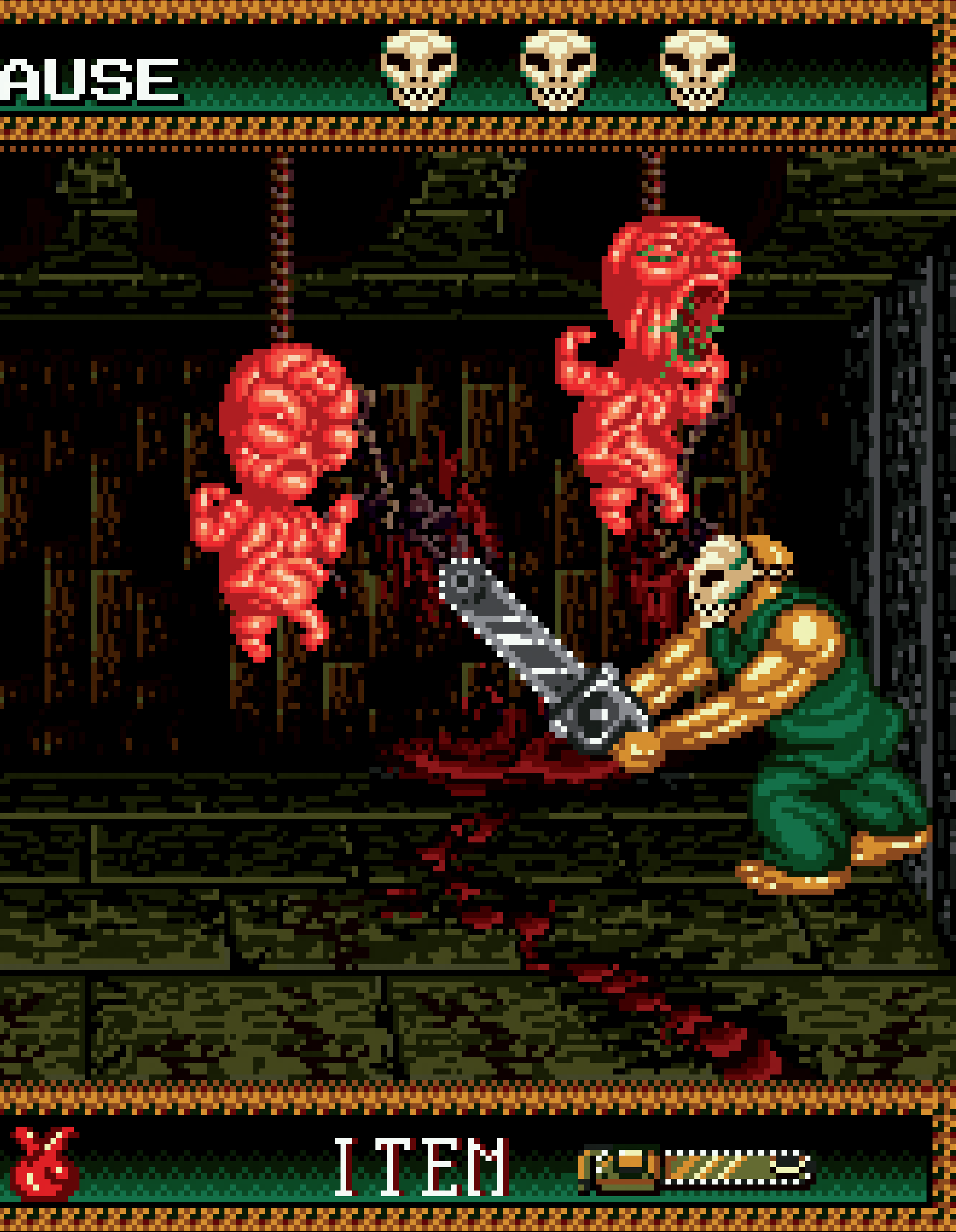


Some videogames seem as if they were carefully designed, pixel by pixel, level by level, until those behind it felt that it truly reflected their vision. At other times it seems that the development team went to a strip bar, got crazy blind drunk, and then wrote down their ideas with the kind of wild abandonment that implies you only have three days to live and it honestly doesn't matter what the hell you get up to. That kind of deranged work ethic is likely to lead to a few risqué ideas being implemented.

Now, we honestly (and legally) can't comment on the state of mind of Namco's employees who worked on the game, and we're certain they're sensible chaps who never allow foreign substances to affect their faculties, but *Splatterhouse 2* turns everything from the original up to 11 and then throws in almost every depraved idea you can imagine. Oh yes, it is very risqué. And we're not only referring to the scantily-clad-babes kind of risqué. No, we mean horror, gore, and all manner of splattery-type vestiges that could no longer fit into hell and so are forced upon the Earth.

For your viewing pleasure, one particularly gruesome scene is shown here: it's our hero Jason applying a chainsaw to some slime-dripping foetuses which have been hanged, as in dead, while behind them is an image of God-only-knows-what and rivers of blood. But that's the thing – while this image will terrify most peoples' grandmothers, kids back in the day couldn't get enough of it. If you weren't craving torrents of claret in your games, then it was a glimpse of some woman's nipples or thighs. On this front you need not worry; *Splatterhouse 2* covers that side of things too – the final level features Jason's girlfriend in a skimpy nightdress. Mega Drive-owning teenagers sure could be a sick lot sometimes. Retro Gamer now anticipates a deluge of letters, titled "Filth This Ban Sick" or some such combination of words. Still, what a great game!




AUSE
ITEM

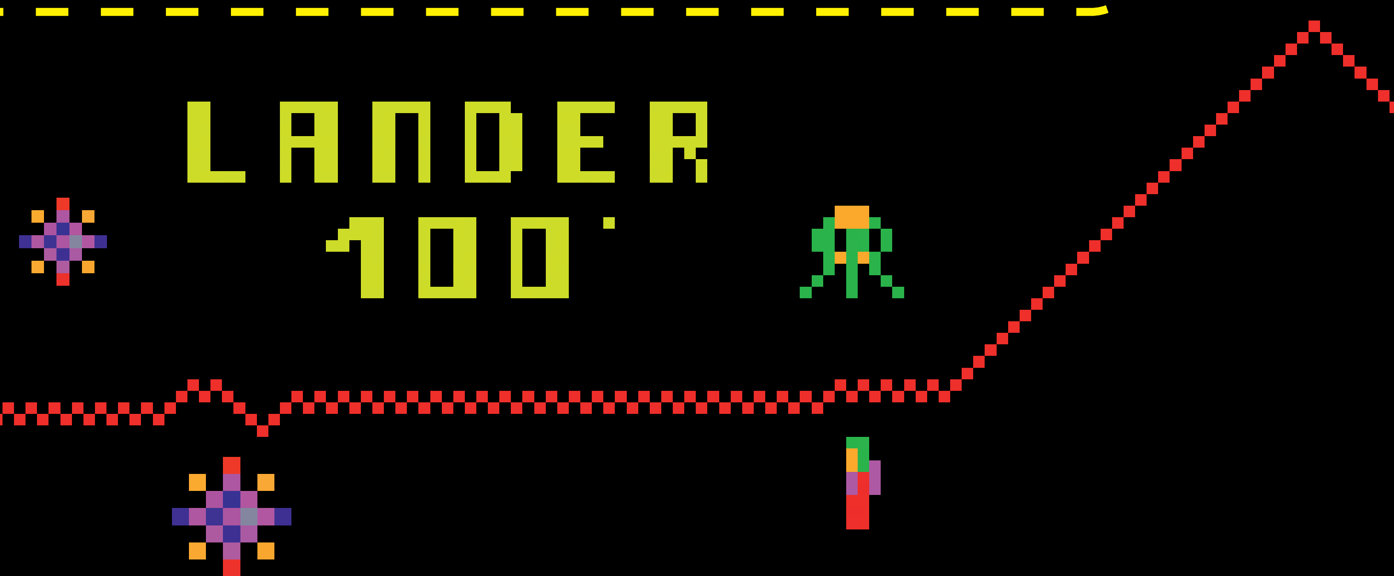
THE DEFINITIVE DEFENDER

AFTER LAST MONTH'S EPIC INVESTIGATION INTO BUBBLE BOBBLE, RETRO GAMER'S POOR EXHAUSTED PROFESSOR OF POSTERITY STUART CAMPBELL NEEDED SOMETHING A LITTLE SIMPLER TO DELIVER A DEFINITIVE DOCUMENTARY DISSERTATION ON. BUT JUST SO HE DIDN'T GET OFF TOO EASILY, WE MADE HIM PLAY THE HARDEST VIDEOGAME SERIES OF ALL.

In business, the worst thing you can do is get something right first time. (Look at the GBA and the DS, for example.) How many of you bought the same console twice, after Nintendo brought out a new version months later with all the features that should have been there in the first place? Hit the nail on the head with your debut release and you've got nowhere to go when it's time to maximise the projected revenue streams from your brand franchise ("release a sequel" in laymen's terms). All great games are delicately balanced, and can easily collapse under the weight of extra features thrown in purely for the sake of adding something new to justify selling you the game again.

Defender is one such game. One of the most terrifyingly difficult coin-ops ever created, it has dauntingly complex controls, a large playing area which needs to be constantly monitored, and merciless enemies who you'll need every ounce of skill and firepower at your disposal to stay on top of. Even the few players who have mastered the game live on a constant knife-edge, where a moment's lapse in concentration can lead to catastrophe – a planet explosion early in *Defender*'s five-wave "life cycle" will wreak carnage in the most diligently-amassed collection of ships and Smart Bombs.

So perhaps more than any other gaming legend, *Defender* is a title that's never been improved on. (If you make it harder you render it impossible to 99.8% of players, and if you make it easier then your core audience won't be interested. And not only is it difficult to follow up *Defender*, the game's physics and design are so finely tuned that the basic mechanics of it will be wrecked if you let anyone even slightly cack-handed near it.) And if you're not convinced by that assertion, join us now as we Hyperspace through history to prove it.

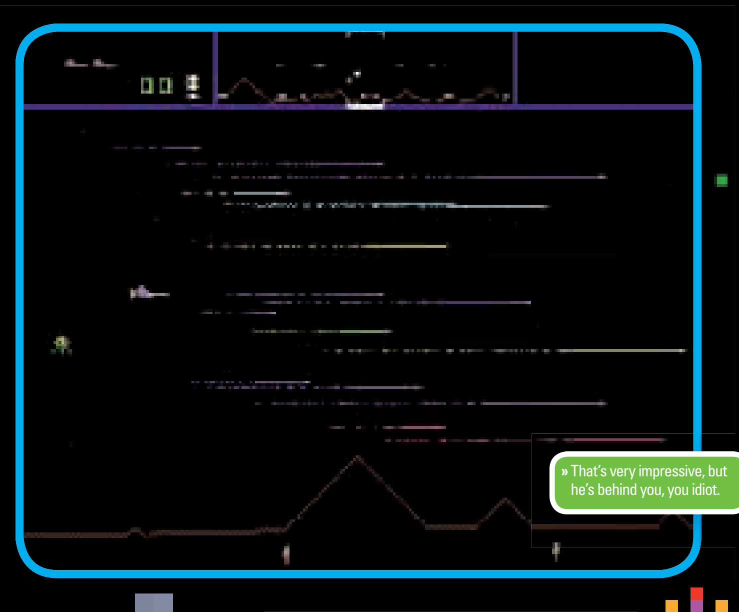


1980

DEFENDER (ARCADE)

Despite the design being tweaked until minutes before the first player put a coin in the slot, *Defender* was a huge hit from the word go, its unprecedented difficulty like a gauntlet slapped across the face of arcade goers used to the gentler challenges of *Galaxian* or *Phoenix*. It was also widely ported to home platforms, from primitive machines like the Atari VCS (see RG27's interview with author Bob Polaro), Apple 2 and VIC-20 up to capable hardware like the Colecovision and C64. The systems that didn't get official ports saw clones like the Spectrum's *Starblitz* and Acornsoft's *Planetoid* for the BBC Micro. (There was also an even better unreleased version of the latter, called *Super Defender*, which surfaced a while ago on the Stairway To Hell website.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: There are lots of good ports for various formats, most recently the bargain-priced *Midway Arcade Treasures* collection for PlayStation 2, Xbox and PC, but you still can't beat MAME's configurable controls for getting as close to the coin-op experience as human(oid)ly possible.



» That's very impressive, but he's behind you, you idiot.

1981

STARGATE AKA DEFENDER 2 (ARCADE)

The follow-up to *Defender* was even more difficult. Grown men wept at the prospect of coping with yet another control button – this time for the "Inviso" shield that granted your ship a brief period of invulnerability, at the cost of not being able to see where you were. Set against this were a whole raft of tiny new enemies, who'd taken the original game's Swarmers as their role model but purged all of their kinder aspects (which were pretty hard to spot in the first place). Designed to mercilessly destroy even those autistic superhumans who'd mastered the first game, *Stargate* is insanely difficult for mere mortals, and didn't have a fraction of the success of its parent.

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME. *Stargate* was converted to very few home platforms at the time, but there was a tremendously good Atari VCS version, with arcade-like graphics (compared to the flickery Legoland cityscape of the VCS's first *Defender*) and an impressively cunning solution to the complex-controls problem whereby you could assign functions to the second joystick and operate Inviso or Smart Bombs on the floor with your foot.

» You're in a fairly substantial amount of trouble already here – on reflection, you probably didn't want to shoot that Pod and release all those Swarmers. Oops.



1988

DEFENDER 2 (ST/AMIGA)

This little-known release, published by the short-lived Atari spin-off Arc and coded by developer Jeff Minter, is something of a pioneer, marking one of the first attempts at updating an arcade classic for modern home formats. It features conversions of both *Defender* and *Stargate* in addition to the new *Defender 2*, and unfortunately that's round about where you run out of good things to say about it.

The 'conversions' of the arcade games were crude and took a mallet and blunt chisel to the precisely poised formula that had made the games such a hit in the first place, and the update is even worse. The complex-but-intuitive arcade controls were junked in favour of an awkward mouse-and-keyboard combination that apparently left no room to include the Hyperspace function (rather like leaving the power pills out of a port of *Pac-Man*), and the excessive speed combined with a slideshow frame-rate (if you ever saw the *Max Headroom* movie, you'll recognise the experience of playing *Defender 2* as rather like watching a blipvert) ensured that even if you could remember which control did what, it wouldn't stop you smashing headlong into the most innocuous enemy before you saw them coming. There seem to be some interesting things happening in *Defender 2* (particularly the drone ships with different powers), but it's so badly executed you'll never get to notice any of them.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The Amiga emulator WinUAE.



» It might look quite nice in this shot, but for more accuracy imagine playing it under a stroboscope while you're absolutely falling-down drunk and the room's on fire.

1991

STRIKE FORCE: DEFENDER 3 (ARCADE)

Perhaps even less well-known than the home version of *Defender 2* is Midway's arcade sequel from three years later, perhaps because the "Defender 3" part of the name is relegated to a small-print subtitle on some versions of the title screen. (For reasons unknown to science, Midway was shy of publicising the game's link to the *Defender* series, and on the version playable in MAME there are only the tiniest clues, such as the high-score table entries spelling out "DEF", "END" and "ER". I'm sure that the revision on the JAMMA board in my cellar displays "Defender 3" on the screen, but my Supergun's SCART output seems to be knackered and I can't check.) In play it's part of the family, and enjoys splendid graphics and some spectacular pyrotechnics, but as was the style of the time (this was the era of arcade remakes like *Smash TV*) it's been swamped in extras and power-ups and complications which – piled onto a game as overwhelming as *Defender* – were just far too much for most players.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Strike Force* runs well in MAME.



» *Strike Force* – just another average day saving the universe from evil space dinosaurs.

1995

DEFENDER & JOUST (GB)

While theoretically just a conversion of the original, this one deserves inclusion as an example of just how bad a job it's possible to make of replicating a simple game, until it's effectively something completely different. Pretty much everything's been screwed with – the Mutants are now savage enemies who can match your speed at maximum thrust, while the Baiter becomes a dumb piece of cannon fodder that flies in a straight line right into your laser on the rare occasion it shows up at all. The planet's been shrunk, there are only half-a-dozen Humanoids occupying it, the scoring is wrong, there's music, Pods and Swarmers don't appear until several screens late, and the view is so zoomed-in that there's no point looking at the main screen at all, as unless you play by the scanner you'll have no time to react to anything dangerous.

Since the game's easy unless you let any Mutants show up, the only strategy is to murder all but one of your Humanoids straight away, then sit and wait by the other one, turkey-shooting the Landers as they trundle along towards it. This kinda undermines the point of the game being called "Defender", a bit. (For pocket defend-o-fun a better port was released for the GBC in 1998 under the title *Joust & Defender*.)

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance.

1996

DEFENDER 2000 (JAGUAR)

After his superb *Tempest 2000*, Atari thought Jeff Minter had nailed the updating-classic-coin-ops routine, so they gave him a second stab at *Defender*. It's fair to say that it was a poor decision and Atari's constant interference with the project (like switching it around between a graphics-heavy CD game and a more restrained cartridge one) were tantamount to leaving the cocaine cupboard unlocked.

Creating a remake of *Defender* that was worse than *Defender 2* should have been an impossible task, but with Herculean effort the Jag version just about pulled it off, largely due to zooming in the view and thereby introducing the stupidest feature anyone could ever imagine putting in a game where the most vital objects are on the ground – vertical scrolling. Luckily, in the 2000 game your inertia-heavy craft was so over-powered that even when you couldn't see where you were going or what you were shooting at, your auto firing, auto-targeting drone ship ensured that it didn't matter – if you just kept flying and trying not to crash into stuff, the game would play itself.

Coupled with tacky graphics (garish in *Defender Plus* and gloomy in *Defender 2000*) and the same over-the-top speed that ruined *Defender 2*, the overall effect was like throwing up on a waltzer at Barbara Cartland's house in a power cut during a thunderstorm.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Defender 2000* just about works in Virtual Jaguar, albeit painfully slowly. The wise choice is to take the hint.



» Pretty much the game's only good feature is that it supports the Super Game Boy adapter, with colour graphics and this quite nice screen surround.

» Get a load of your big fat monster-ship. (Hey, I wonder if that's what Jabba The Hutt's minions called him? "Here's your enormous bucket of cakes, your big fat monster-ship.")



2002
DEFENDER (GAME BOY ADVANCE)

Poor old *Defender*. There's so much going on in this release, and it's all so awful, that it defies explanation in this limited space. There are three main game modes, of which the least atrocious is "Classic", a fairly straightforward port that's only really ruined by the diabolical control, which is at once treacle-slow and overly twitchy (depending largely on which axis you're moving in). Then there's *Defender XP*, ostensibly the classic game with updated graphics, but which uses a different control method, with the D-pad effecting normal directional movement rather than the traditional thrust-and-reverse (executed with the shoulder buttons) of the classic mode.

Worst of all, though, is the default main game, *Defender XGP*, which is simply an utter mess. Massive graphics that resemble the aftermath of sneezing on your GBA reduce manoeuvring space to a minimum, five selectable ships overcomplicate matters pointlessly, and the gameplay is diluted with all sorts of incomprehensible "defending"-related missions and subgames. It's nothing like *Defender*, and it's even less like a good videogame.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Visual Boy Advance.

2003
DEFENDER (PS2, XBOX, GAMECUBE)

At more or less the same time as the GBA atrocity Midway also released a modern updating of *Defender* that brought it unmistakeably into the 3D age while still retaining the core values and atmosphere of the original. Evidently somewhat modelled on the successful GameCube title *Rogue Squadron*, the 2003 *Defender* actually does away with almost every identifiable feature of the 1980 game, but nevertheless captures an appreciable amount of its frantic, against-the-odds feel as you scoot around various deep-space outposts protecting them from a ferocious alien onslaught. Slightly optimistic sales forecasts at the time mean that the PS2, Xbox and GameCube versions are all fixtures in the £5-or-less bargain bins of most game stores, and while not brilliant, it's well worth picking up at that price.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Your PS2, Xbox or GameCube, obviously.



» The graphics help to contribute to an authentically menacing ambience.



» You (the droopy beige thing) are ostensibly escorting/defending that big grey ship, but it seems to explode and rematerialise at random moments regardless of what you do.

» The new graphic style is rather pretty, but unfortunately makes the game even more unplayable by taking away all your manoeuvring space.

2005
DEFENDER (MOBILE PHONE)

Normal service, however, was resumed in what's currently the most recent *Defender*: last year's port to mobile phones. You might well think that trying to adapt a game like *Defender* onto a mobile phone's tiny screen and keypad was one of the stupidest ideas anyone's ever had, and this mangled version with its gigantic graphics and microscopic screen area would confirm your suspicions. Still, maybe someone'll get it right on the Wii, eh?

PLAY IT NOW ON: Some sort of mission of self-punishment.







WHY YOU MUST PLAY!

THE DIVIDE: ENEMIES WITHIN

Publisher: Viacom New Media

Developer: Radical Entertainment

Released: Dec 1996

Featured Format: PSOne

Expect to pay: $15 (eBay USA)

FOR WHATEVER REASON, SOME OF THE BEST GAMES RELEASED OVER THE YEARS HAVE FAILED TO GAIN THE ATTENTION THEY SO RICHLY DESERVE AND ARE OVERLOOKED BY THE PUBLIC. TO REMEDY THIS SITUATION RETRO GAMER WILL BE CHAMPIONING SUCH TITLES; THIS MONTH WE COVER THE SUPER METROID-INSPIRED THE DIVIDE: ENEMIES WITHIN ON PSONE.

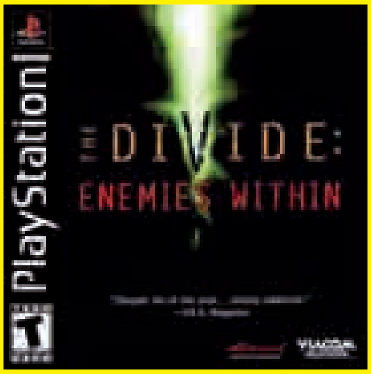
OTHER VERSIONS

Other versions of *The Divide: Enemies Within* were developed by Radical Entertainment. One release was a PC version, receiving even less fanfare than the PSOne game. Reviewers of the day were harsh, flaying for having pre-set save areas rather than quick-saving. Needing a Windows 95 based Pentium PC with 133Mhz and 16Mb RAM, this might be a cheaper option for some, and at the very least an interesting curio to own. More interestingly is that according to Greg James, who was Programmer and QA Director at Radical Entertainment, they also developed a Sega Saturn version. Having never seen one in the wild, we're sure collectors would pay big money for a beta copy…



For some games it would seem as if destiny itself was intent on bringing about failure. It's as if nothing, not even excellence, could have saved them from bargain bins and commercial obscurity. *The Divide: Enemies Within* (hereafter referred to as *Divide*) was such a game, plagued with problems from the very beginning, ultimately ignored by critics and consumers alike and yet somehow among all this managing to be, in Retro Gamer's opinion, not only a fantastic PSOne game but also a fine homage to Nintendo's *Super Metroid.*

Problems started when Radical Entertainment sought a publisher – each time they found one it was bought out, leaving them hanging. When *Divide* finally came to market it was very late, sneaking into American stores at the tail-end of 1996.



» **Right:** The minimalist cover and obfuscated title did not sadly encourage sales.

The unintuitive name resulted in incorrect listings, while most magazines only got around to reviewing it in early 1997. Their biggest criticism along with average scores? That it was too 16-bit in terms of design and too much like a last generation title. It was almost universally shunned.

Now, it must be asked, what does "too 16-bit" even mean? The game features a complex control scheme utilising every button on the pad, various multi-use items and weapons, and a gradually expanding area of exploration. By all accounts the gameplay was substantial. Neither could it have been a result of everyone's obsession with the third-dimension and aversion to all things 2D – *Divide* implemented 3D with great panache and achieved all that was possible at that time. In all likelihood the comments probably arose because of its startling similarity to the SNES classic *Super Metroid*, in terms of atmosphere and design. The cliché of familiarity breeding contempt suddenly seems apt. Its greatest blessing became its ultimate flaw – a simple case of bad timing, being released long before the term "Metroidvania" came into vogue and people started clamouring for all and any such titles available.

Divide works on two different levels: it has a complicated well written plot coupled with incredible atmosphere, which is backed up by solid and accomplished gameplay. The game starts after a rousing written account detailing the main characters, Tanken and Advina, both of whom are



» It's a descendant of the creature from the intro – and it appears to be clutching a Terragator unit

mercenaries protecting a ship of sentient AI refugees, which is escaping a planet in the throes of a Luddite-styled revolution – Tanken's motives being to break away from the ways of the mysterious old order. None of the technicalities are explained and much is left to the imagination, meaning the story doesn't run the risk of sloppy writing or feeling overworked. A respectable looking FMV introduces their vessel drifting through space, with all passengers in hibernation, as it searches for a suitable new home world. An uninhabitable frozen planet is discovered, but maybe the gaping fissure on its surface can support life, and so ten automated probes are dispatched.

Things go awry when one of these probe crashes and kills the mate of an indigenous creature, while the radiation from them grants sentiency to all nearby life. Tanken and Advina are awoken from cryo-sleep hibernation and board their enormous Terragator units (giant walking mechs), before heading down into *The Divide*. The enraged creature attacks and immobilises them, before carrying Advina off. Tanken remains and is again plunged into hibernation when his heating unit fails.

Over an unknown period of time The Divide thaws out and Tanken eventually regains consciousness, his Terragator unit badly damaged (with all items having been stolen) and barely operable, at which point the player takes control. The time spent lying there is never disclosed, but by the look of how drastically everything has changed, the implication is millennia. Advina is likely dead and you are now stranded with no hope of return. While the game contains no further narrative moments until the end, this subtle technique of alienating and inducing a sense of loneliness in the player makes each discovery and step of exploration feel

IT HAS A COMPLICATED WELL WRITTEN PLOT COUPLED WITH INCREDIBLE ATMOSPHERE, WHICH IS THEN BACKED UP BY SOLID AND WELL DESIGNED GAMEPLAY



» Be wary in the Lava Rift, the enemies will try to ambush you as shown here

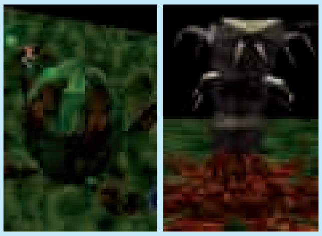
BEASTLY BOSSES

The bosses were all once harmless foragers, now mutated over the millennia by the probes' radiation. Here's a selection.



MOROPUS – THE CLAWED BEARHORSE (SIC)

As the first hideously deformed guardian, Moropus guards the Jumper which frees you from the confines of ground level. Fast strafing makes short work of him.



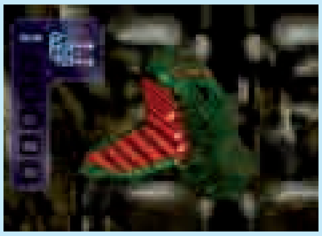
PAPILLION – THE BAD SEED

Arguably the toughest boss, by virtue of you being underpowered. A hybrid of plant and insect, Papillion takes two forms: first a pod firing deadly seeds, followed by a hatched larva with missiles. Keep jumping!



GIANWHU – THE CRABBY ASSASSIN

By now you should have the Ice Grippers, which thankfully restore standard walking. Ignore his formidable size, GianWhu is slow and poorly mobile – just make sure to avoid his powerful attacks.



GASTRO – THE LIZARD KING

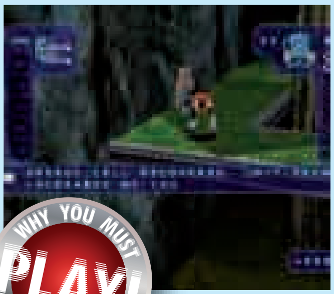
This multi-tailed serpent lives in the side of a giant mountain, occasionally poking out to attack you. Make use of diagonal firing and the available platforms. Don't fall down the ravine just below him!

MAGICAL MOMENT

There were many magical moments where it hit you just how inspired by *Metroid* things are. Cynics may call it plagiarism and unoriginal, but we say it's the sincerest form of flattery. There are Power Bombs, Missiles and 99 unit Energy Tanks that resonate with a familiar chime when collected, not to mention an expanding map, several elevators, and more.

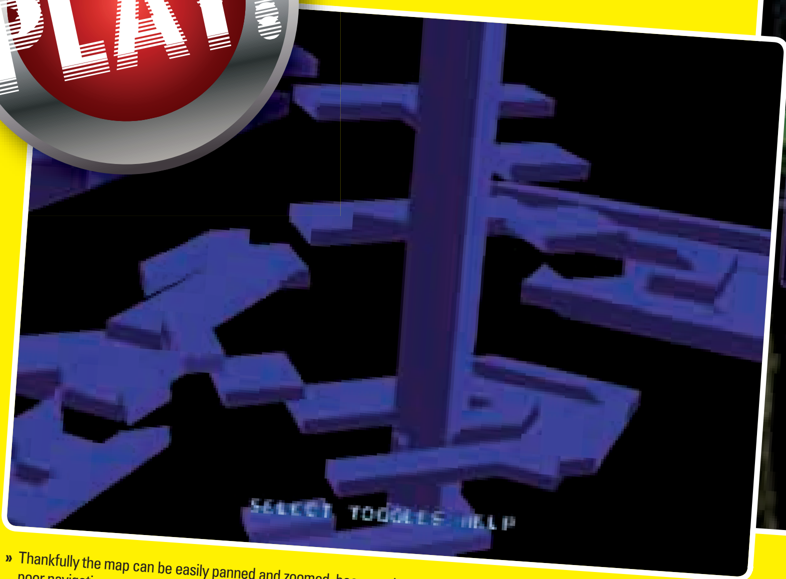












» Thankfully the map can be easily panned and zoomed, because there's nothing more frustrating than a 3D game with poor navigation



» You probably can't hear it by looking at this screenshot, but the music is hauntingly good. Trust us on this one

TERRAGATOR FULL OF TRICKS

Just like *Super Metroid* there are many items that power you up and enable further progress. Some important ones:



REPAIR KIT
The game starts with your Terragator unit limping due to damage. Find this to enable normal walking.



TERRAIN MAPPER
This handy item maps where you've already been in the game, displaying it as a moveable blue polygon display.



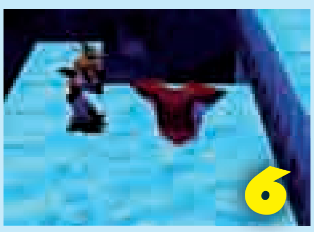
JUMPER UNIT
Until you've found the jumper unit, even small obstacles stop you. Later on you're able to double jump.



TRANSPORTER KEY
This key activates the dormant transporter system. But who built it, and for what reasons?



HEATING UNIT
Essential for the Ice Chasms, this keeps the joints defrosted and seats toasty warm.



ARMOUR
There are two armour upgrades: the first is found in the Ice Chasms, the second is found in the Sky City.

like the reading of another's diary. Why were the once docile creatures suddenly driven to create huge eerie structures throughout their world? Why had they taken and hidden various pieces of equipment? What exactly had the launching of those probes set in motion and what can the ultimate conclusion to this quest for survival be?

The game's basic structure is that of a guerrilla war, slowly acquiring items and weapons until you're powerful enough to actually reach and engage in the final confrontation. Each additional munitions pack makes you stronger, while the enemy gets weaker. The pacing of these items is implemented in a way to encourage exploration and give players a sense of real achievement. From the opening the Terragator unit is limping, but less than a minute later a repair kit is found and normal walking is restored. Progress can't continue until this item is collected, but overall it adds nothing to the sequence of gameplay events. It's one of many superfluous little touches which builds atmosphere and sets up the nature of things ahead; progress is halted or staggered until the necessary items have been acquired.

Weapons are suitably powerful and diverse, comprised of screen-filling Power Bombs, Standard Missiles, Homing Missiles, a Gatling Cannon, Flame Laser and Particle Blaster. For each of these there were five ammo canisters to be found as well as energy tanks to collect, making methodical exploration of each area worthwhile. There's also a degree of non-linearity to exploration, and by the time you acquire the Double Jumper no area should be beyond reach.

The graphics make clever use of 3D, with hidden passages and areas. These never frustrate due to the cleverly implemented

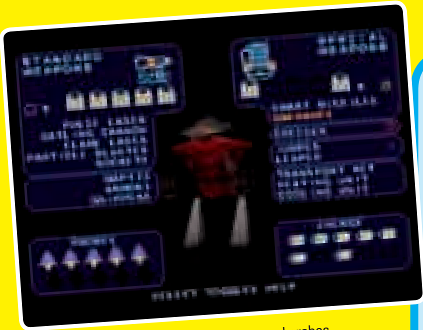
THE GAME'S BASIC STRUCTURE IS THAT OF A GUERRILLA WAR. EACH ADDITIONAL MUNITIONS PACK MAKES YOU STRONGER, WHILE THE ENEMY GETS WEAKER



» An area to recharge all your energy and missiles. Wait, didn't *Super Metr*… Okay! We'll stop with the comparisons



» While you were unconscious for god knows how long, someone replicated the Terragator unit



» The status screen: Weapons, items and probes acquired, plus your current ammo and energy



» Prior to the planet being discovered, there's a short training mission to accustom you to things

map screen. It works elegantly, as all map screens should, and makes the viewing of whole areas easy, making it ideal for noting points of interest that later need exploring. Rather than attempting a fully freeform camera, the game has a fixed camera that can be panned up and down. In conjunction with the map screens, this ensures you are never lost, and are never without an idea of where to go next. It also makes the 3D platforming sections as painless as possible, with only one notable section in the Lava Rift area proving mildly frustrating.

Considering how many other games omit even the simplest of things, it's refreshing to find that the designers have taken into account what normally frustrates gamers. For example, while there are lengthy jumping sections in the slippery Ice Chasms, the actual platforms you are jumping onto have barriers at their sides to stop you falling off. Again, it's these small touches that show that while the team were trying to come close to replicating *Super Metroid*'s design structure, they also had an understanding of what wouldn't work. This helps to make the adventure very satisfying. Those expecting a lengthy and silky smooth 60-frames-per-second adventure might be a little disappointed at the frame rate and slightly short length (around 5 hours), but this doesn't detract from what is an otherwise excellent game, and one which invokes nostalgic recollections of a genuine classic. At its core it may have been an imitation, but when you're imitating the best it's inevitable that some of the original quality will emerge.

LOCATION, LOCATION

The Divide's organic environments are varied and hostile…

PLANET SURFACE

Malfunctioning, desperate, alone, and stranded on a desolate Planet Surface. Cold walls of crude concrete haphazardly criss-crossed with pipes greet you, while the background music is eerily reminiscent of Meridia.



FOREST CANYON

There's constant rain as lightning blisters the sky above, and enemies home in on you. The forest contains many essential items, but you'll have the navigate the maze of branches found high above.



JUNGLE GORGE

Decayed ruins cover the landscape, created by civilisations that don't exist – except in the depraved nightmares of the possessed creatures wandering throughout. Amid the vine covered pillars, beware of crumbling platforms.



ICE CHASMS

In freezing temperatures far too low for even machines like the Terregator unity, there manages to survive a great many evils. To succeed against them you will need the heating unit, but who knows where it lies?



DESERT ARROYO

The searing wastes of the Arroyo desert is home to unnatural forms of organic and machine transmutations. The temperature reaches 200 degrees Celsius, making the cooling unit essential for survival.



LAVA RIFT

Rivers of lava flow beneath metal spires and platforms – the enemies are immune to the molten slag but you are not, so avoid falling in. Down below, beneath the behemoth structures, lies an enemy and an old friend.





» This handy transport machine removes the need for backtracking long distances



» A scorching area that can cause overheating?

KNOW YOUR FOE

Just a few of the lesser creatures that you fight.



SKRIT



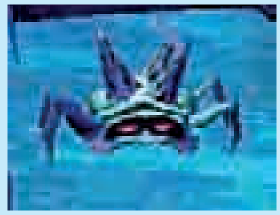
KIMPH



FOREST MOLE



DOZER



KRITAH



They were the ultimate computer whiz kids, the Darlings of the industry. But twenty years after setting up Codemasters, Richard and David Darling are still going strong. As they embark on a new chapter in the company's life, David Crookes looks back at the publisher's successes – and its frustrating, frequent court battles.





CODING

It is not easy pinning David Darling down. Emails go back and forth, telephone calls are missed, texts read, "sorry I missed you." But it's no surprise. Codemasters, the publisher David co-founded with his brother, Richard, is undergoing a reorganisation and, as you would expect, it is taking up much of his time.

A new management team has been drafted in as Codemasters undergoes the process of being restructured. Much of it is to enable the firm to make an easy transition to the next generation of games consoles, but it was sparked by the resignation in January 2005 of Chief Executive Officer Nick Wheelwright following 11-years of working with the company.

David took on the role of CEO in addition to being chairman. And with that, he signalled his intention to take a more active role in the company, harking back to 1986 when his involvement was very much hands on as he and his brother began to make Codemasters the main player of the budget market.

That they managed to succeed came as no surprise given David and Richard's background. As children they were fascinated by electronics – their grandfather taught them how to build radios, small machines and robots – and their corporate brains were also being nurtured, mainly by their father, James, who introduced them to computers while he was working on designs for one of the world's first disposable contact lenses, which he sold in a flourishing business. James' success, however, had also led to an unconventional upbringing for his sons. Although David was born in Britain, he spent much of his time abroad, living in Holland at the age of two, residing in Australia – where Richard was born – for a spell and emigrating to Vancouver, Canada, aged 10. "We also lived on a boat in France for two years. That was fun," recalls David, now a 40-year-old softly spoken man.

But it was while at school in Vancouver that David really fell in love with computers. "We were first shown computers during a maths lesson. I can't recall what computer it was but I remember there was only one keyboard, so we all had to fill in punch cards. It was fun but laborious and we'd spend hours filling in square boxes. But when it finally worked it was amazing. We were so fascinated; we used to remain after school. The janitor would let us stay in the classroom until 10pm and we just played around."

Soon after, their father bought a Commodore Pet, which he let his sons borrow. They used it to create their first game: a text version of *Dungeons & Dragons*. "We were into *Dungeons & Dragons* at the time so it made perfect sense," David says. "In those days there were very few games available for the Pet so it went down very well with our friends. It became something of a cult at school."

In 1981, their friend, Michael Heibert, went to America and came back with a Commodore Vic-20. With better graphics and sound, the Darlings realised the potential and set up their first firm, combining Heibert and Darling to create Darbert Computers.

They knocked out versions of existing titles, from *Frogger* to *Pac-Man*. And they continued to write games, even when they

IN BRIEF

David Darling becomes interested in computers while at school in Vancouver and soon gets brother Richard involved. Together with their pal Michael Heibert, they form Darbert Computers and set up a mail order firm to sell their many games. Mastertronic's scouts pick up on their talent and they end up owning half the company before selling up and creating Codemasters, which goes on to great success with a range of budget titles. They also form a great partnership with The Oliver Twins and fight Nintendo... twice.



DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

BACK THE YEARS

were sent back to Britain by their father to study for their O-Levels. Rather than let their fledgling firm die, Michael and the Darlings would send each other tapes of their home-brew games. What set them apart from many bedroom programmers at the time, however, was their determination to publish and sell their creations.

"We took out an advertisement in Popular Computing Weekly," David continues. "It cost £70 and was black and white. As some of the Commodore and Spectrum games were created by our friend, we advertised the titles as 'Great Games From America' and sold them for £9.99. We launched the firm just before Christmas in 1982 when there were not many games in the shops. And the orders just poured in! At first, I bought lots of tape recorders and stayed up all night copying tapes. Then we got a music duplication company in Bridgewater – since we were living in Somerset – to copy them. I bought a scooter and would drive round to collect the tapes. It was hard work but so much fun."

By making themselves known in the industry and by knocking out quality cover versions of existing games, they soon caught the attention of the emerging big-name players.

One of those was, Mastertronic, a computer game publishing company that had been set up in 1983 by Martin Alper, Frank Herman and Alan Sharam. Mastertronic specialised in budget titles and the trio came to the industry with stacks of experience of distributing videotapes.

Mastertronic had succeeded in persuading many newsagents, motorway service stations and toyshops to take their products, with the promise that they would guarantee a steady stream of new titles. The only problem was, Mastertronic needed talent – prolific talent with the skills to produce these new games.

"When Mastertronic launched it didn't know much about the industry," David explains. "So it called all the people who had been placing games ads in magazines. We were one of those so they contacted us and asked us to do some stuff for them and we agreed. We then started to write for other platforms – the Dragon 32 and BBC Electron – and we could sense that our venture was growing. Mastertronic also realised that and, since we were sourcing 70 per cent of Mastertronic's software, we ended up owning a 50 per cent share in the company."

At the same time, the Darlings programmed games for Mirrorsoft and Commodore, operating as a company called Artificial Intelligence Products. But after a few years of this, they decided it was time to go it alone. They sold their shares in March 1986 and used the money to set up Codemasters six months later.

While publicity-shy Richard carried on writing games, David concentrated on the business side of things ("I wasn't the best programmer but I'd be good at managing the other development teams – I knew about what we were trying to achieve," he says). And with a wealth of contacts in the industry, the brothers easily gathered together 12 games for the launch of their new company, among them Richard Darling's *BMX Simulator*. Other simulators followed, including The Oliver Twins' excellent *Grand Prix Simulator*. "We decided to go for simulators in a big way. When we wrote lots



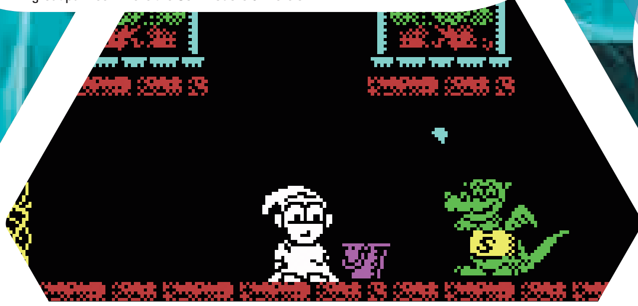


» *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy* caused a stir due to its excessive £9.99 price tag



» *MTV Music Generator* – Now you can see sound as well as hear it. Nice





» **Below:** *Slightly Magic* was one of the better Dizzy clones and featured some great puzzles. This is the Commodore 64 version

of games for Virgin we had access to sales figures and could see the royalty statements.

"Lots of fantasy games were being created by programmers who were making up their own little, fun worlds. But the simulators appeared to sell ten times better. I think this was because they were recognisable. You knew what you were getting with *Grand Prix Simulator* for instance and it was those games that people would snap up on an impulse buy at Boots."

He adds: "We always enjoyed creating simulators. They were easier to programme too because they're supposed to simulate real life and so you have parameters and a framework to work within. Creating the physics and fractures was fun and we were striving to publish games that worked like they did in real life. It was a principle we extended to the *Colin McRae Rally* games."

were offering great value for money, which is why we had lots of loyalty from gamers."

Codemasters' quest for familiarity continued with a raft of simulators until the circle was broken: the Oliver Twins produced *Super Robin Hood* and marked a new direction for Codemasters – a game based on a legendary character that the Darlings snapped up for £10,000.

"We had been chatting with the Olivers and were wondering if we could take our real life approach and extend it to a platform game," says David. "We took our lead from Disney, which takes famous stories that are out of copyright, and decided to go with a game based on Robin Hood."

The game, which included digitised speech in some versions, was a fun, often difficult platformer with bags of charm. It did well

NATIONAL NEWSPAPERS CONTINUED TO PICK UP ON THE DARLINGS, INTRIGUED BY THE MONEY THE TEENAGERS WERE PULLING IN – THE "WHIZ KIDS" TAG STUCK

The Darlings decided the budget market was the ideal place for them. Sales were buoyant and Codemasters was getting a growing reputation for producing good quality games at low prices, redefining the predominant perception that bottom-end pricing equalled terrible titles.

"We decided to ape Mastertronic's budget strategy," says David. "Most games in 1982 and 1983 cost £6.99 and £9.99 but Mastertronic was in the video industry where budget was a big sector. When they bought a catalogue of stuff from us, they had them in garages, newsagents, everywhere. So when we broke away, that was the market we knew. We just thought that the games we made were of a high standard and we felt that we

enough for Codemasters to take a gamble on another platformer – this time one with no legendary background to draw upon.

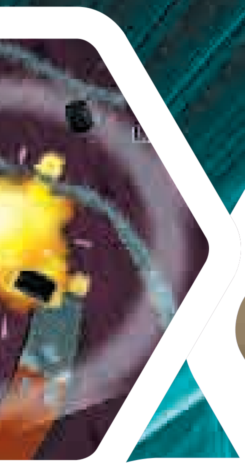
David explains: "We were speaking to The Oliver Twins in London at a computer show and had always been impressed by their enthusiasm and passion for games and their talent for creating them. We'd also loved *Robin Hood*. And that game meant they had all the platform technicalities to hand. One day they'd been playing around and come up with an egg character called Dizzy. They showed it to us but to be honest we were not keen at all. We wanted another sim. For us, it went against the whole real life thing – we loved simulators and liked Robin Hood but a bouncing egg? It was not really what we were after. Yet the

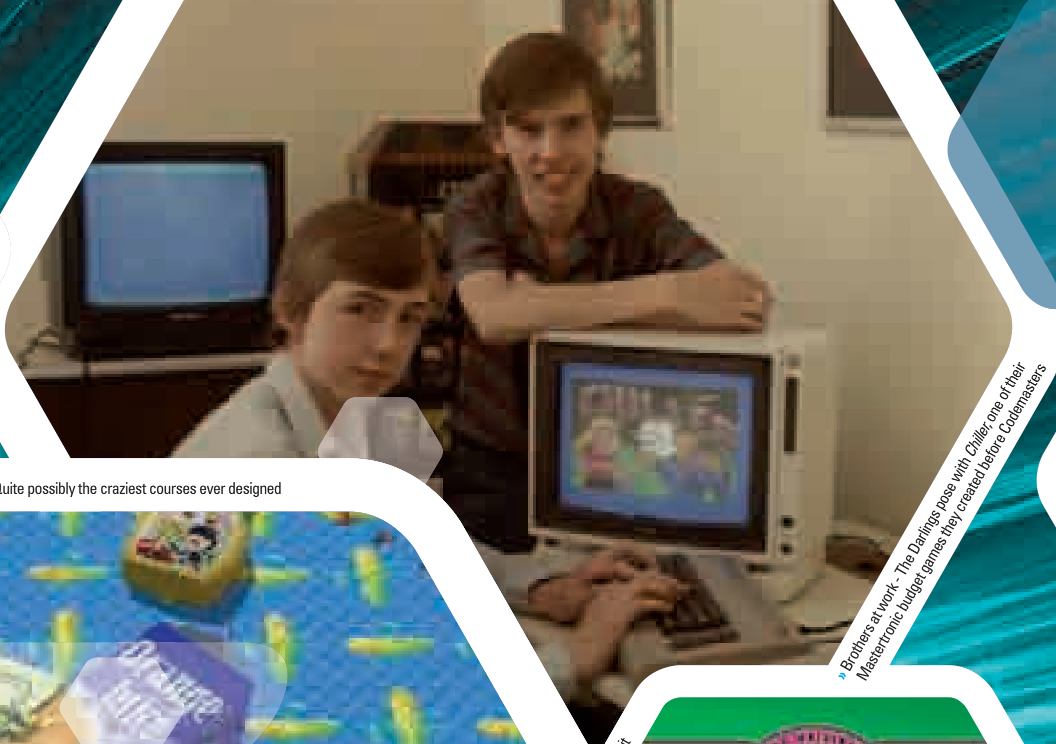
SAY WHAT?

It could have come from Crash, Your Sinclair or any number of computer mags from the time.

But the quote, "Pure Cartoon adventure set in deepest Transylvania – it's absolutely brilliant", was written by none other than David Darling. It appeared on the back of the inlay for the compilation Quattro Carton in praise of *Frankenstein Junior* and was one of many gushing comments by the Darlings on Codemasters' boxes. "We were naive," David admits. "We felt so strongly and passionately about our products that we'd say how great and playable they were. So we put the comments on the box."

In contrast, Your Sinclair slammed the game, calling it "a truly dreadful flip-screen runabout."





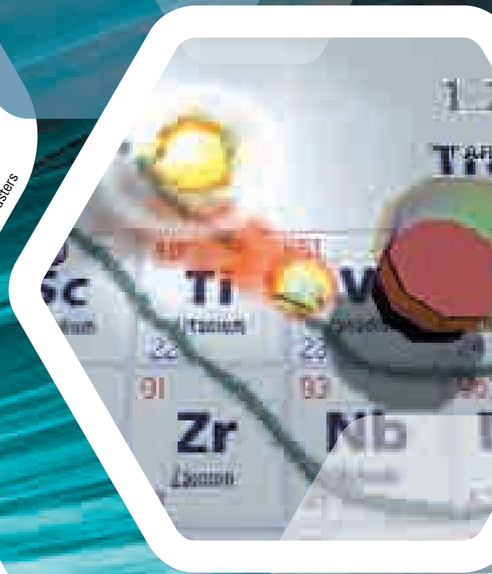
» Brothers at work - The Darlings pose with Chiller, one of their Mastertronic budget games they created before Codemasters



» » Quite possibly the craziest courses ever designed



» *Micro Machines* was another instant hit



Olivers were so enthusiastic about this project, we decided to give them free reign. And then we became impressed by it – there was something special about the way Dizzy moved and kids loved him."

The Dizzy games went down well with reviewers. The first title achieved above average marks but the subsequent titles began to receive glowing accolades – *Fantasy World Dizzy* and *Magicland Dizzy* became Amstrad Action Rave games.

By this time, any thoughts of going to university had been banished forever, much to the disappointment of their father. The Darlings were worried that if they went to university they would be left behind in the flourishing games industry. Their father – who joined the company himself, as chairman – duly noted their dedication to the business.

David says: "Not going to university meant we missed out on going to clubs and all of the other teenage things – but the business was our number one priority. We also tried to ignore the outside influences – there were reports in the papers that we were whiz kids living the high life. It's not what we wanted to achieve. In reality, there was no going out and getting different girls every night just because we had some money. In fact, I've always had long-term relationships; I've been lucky in that respect."

Yet national newspapers continued to pick up on the Darlings, intrigued by the money the teenagers were pulling in. The "whiz kids" tag stuck and the Darlings became celebrities. Headlines such as "The Darlings Of The Industry" were being thrown around like confetti and with such great awareness of Codemasters and its products, the firm's stature in the industry grew.

It was continuing to knock out new games and then realised there was profit in its back catalogue, so, in 1990, the company branched into compilations in a big way, taking its old titles and repackaging them under the new Quattro brand.

In terms of value, they were unbeatable. In terms of getting all of the games to work, they proved troublesome. Yet at £2.99 for four games – or just under 75p each – the series proved popular and spawned a host of genre-inspired packs. These ranged from Adventure, Cartoon, Coin-Ops, Combat, Fantastic and Firepower to Power, Racers, Skills, Sports and Super Hits.

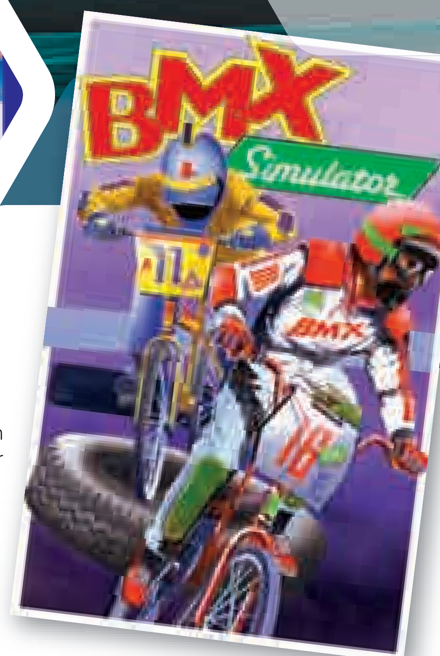
"It gave us an opportunity to republish our old games," says David. "If a game is not around on the shelf, you take opportunities to republish. I also think some people may have tried a Quattro tape, liked the genre and bought other games in that genre."

Although compilations were a tried-and-tested method – US Gold's Geoff Brown laying claim to having "invented" them some years earlier – the Darling's company was innovative in other ways.

At the beginning of 1990, it was announced that the firm was releasing a compilation of 30 of its best games on CD. The idea was that Spectrum, C64 and Amstrad CPC owners could hook up their hi-fi or portable CD player to their computers and load their games faster and more reliably from a compact disc.

In practice it worked. Connecting the CD player from the headphone socket to the joystick port of a Spectrum was easy. You then loaded an initialising program from a supplied cassette to ensure the computer recognised the CD player before selecting the game you wanted, finding the right track on the compact disc and loading it up. You then disconnected the whole thing, plugged in the joystick and played away. It took around 40 seconds to load each game.

At £19.99, it was something of a bargain, in keeping with Codemasters philosophy. It came with two versions of *BMX 2*, *Treasure Island Dizzy*, *Snooker*, *Fast Food*, *Rugby Sim*, *Jetski Sim*, *Dizzy*, *3D Starfighter*, *Pinball Sim*, *11 A-Side Soccer*, *Pro Ski Sim*, *Ghost Hunters*, *Grand Prix Sim*, *Super Stuntman*, *Fruit Machine Sim*, *BMX Freestyle*, *ATY Sim*, *Street Soccer*, *Moto X Sim*, *Twin Turbo V8*, *Death Stalker*, *Indoor Soccer*, *Bigfoot*, *Arcade Flight Sim*, *Skateboard Sim*, *Soccer Skills*, *Street*



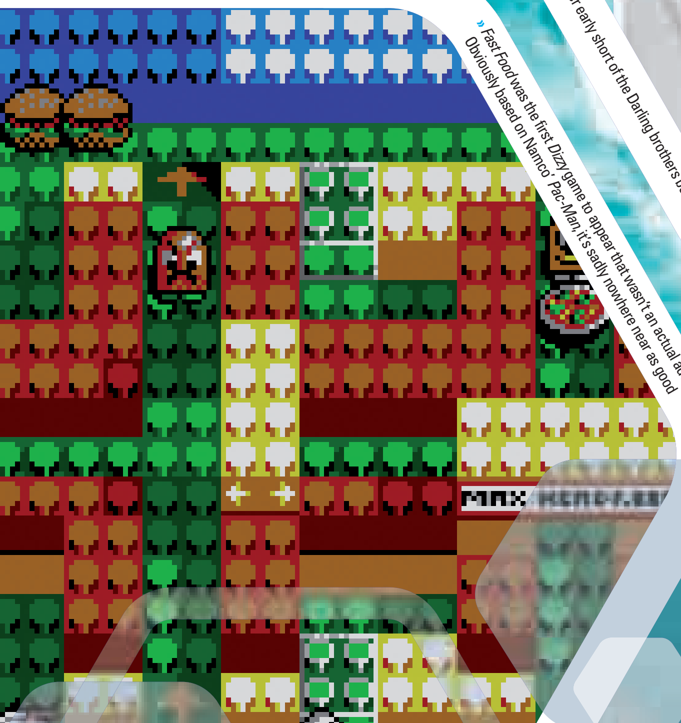
» Codemasters' very first Simulator title. More were to come, many more…



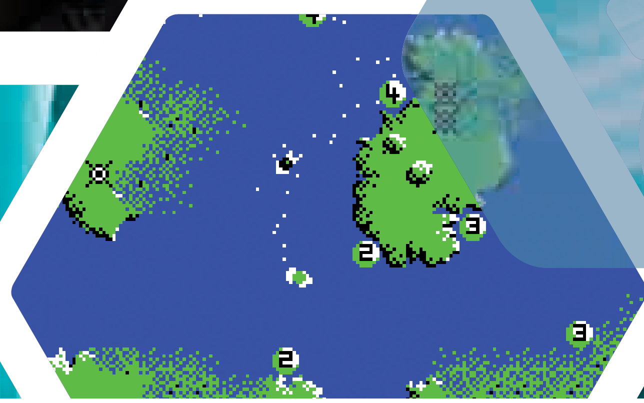
» The brothers pose for yet another publicity shot at a 1983 trade show - fashion police just out of sight



» Another early short of the Darling brothers before they hit the big time



» *Fast Food* was the first *Dizzy* game to appear that wasn't an actual adventure. Obviously based on Namco's *Pac-Man*, it's sadly nowhere near as good





Gang Football, *Super Robin Hood*, *Vampire*, and *Ninja Massacre.* Quite a selection.

But it didn't take off. Poor sales meant a follow-up did not materialise and no other company followed suit. Maybe it was launched too late – by 1990, many computer users were moving on to 16-bit machines.

David says: "We decided that we were being limited by manufacturers and whether their computers had tapes or disc or whatever so we thought we could produce our own hardware to get around this problem. Everyone had CD players – they were good quality and better than tape. Tape would stretch and was unpredictable. When duplicating, something would always go wrong. We thought if we could build a simple cable interface, analogue or digital, we could take CDs to 8-bit home computers. But we just didn't spend enough money marketing or promoting it. There were 30 games on the CD and it was a full price release but we were not used to selling at full price. We were used to putting out high quality, impulse purchases at £1.99 and we were still using this philosophy with the CD release. I also think people were more excited about games than the delivery of the mechanics. Having said that, we had thought about manufacturing a console at one stage – a guy who worked with us had come up with graphics chips and wanted to produce a console. But at that time, the CD32 was released and it wasn't doing very well. It was a pipedream for us. We knew, as programmers, when an idea would be good and would make it, but we were not set up for creating consoles."

The poor set up in terms of publicity jarred with the Darlings. They could see their press relations needed a boost, yet, unlike more media savvy companies at the time, it did not have a publicity manager. The Darlings would merely arrange for tapes to be sent to the magazines and did not spend much on advertising. "We wondered if advertising made a difference to the coverage we got; we didn't spend much on ads," says David. "We thought reviewers just didn't get some of our games. For example, we thought we'd make *Fruit Machine Simulator* but the mags said there was no point because you couldn't win any money. The game was different to what magazines expected – they wanted to see *Sabre Wulfs* and things like that. We were concentrating 100 per cent on games and giving little thought to promotion."

Codemasters eventually employed Richard Eddy who quit as managing editor of Crash at the end of 1991. At that time, Crash had been going through some major problems (the magazine lasted for just five more issues) and had been bought from Newsfield by Europress.

Eddy took his expertise and assisted in the company's rise from cheap yet cheerful purveyors of budget games to their current status as a well-respected and highly successful publishing house.

And it was certainly going places. Codemasters owned a farmhouse in the village of Southam, close to the rather tranquil town of Leamington Spa. The farmhouse was situated on a road leading south out of the town, the only hint that there is anything around being a tiny black and white sign directing people towards "Lower Farm". The Darlings had asked for some of the outbuildings to be converted into small offices and over time, with many planning applications lodged with the local council, they were granted permission to extend and convert properties on the land. Space was at such a premium that portable cabins were brought in and it was in one of these that The Oliver Twins worked for a spell, having snapped up an apartment in Leamington Spa with the aim of creating *Dizzy* for the NES.

Codemasters' relationship with Nintendo was not entirely rosy, however. It had incurred the Japanese giant's wrath on two occasions: the first by bypassing the NES's lockout chip and the second by producing the *Game Genie*.

Codemasters wanted to create games for the NES so it asked The Oliver Twins to write a simple version of *Treasure Island Dizzy*

SIMS CITY

Codemasters' reliance on simulators prompted some magazines to parody the company.
Your Sinclair played an April Fool's Day stunt saying a new game, Advanced Lawnmower Simulator, was due to be released. Reviewer Duncan Macdonald said the advertising blurb claimed it was "the most advanced domestic chore simulation yet to hit the home micro," describing how it pitted you as a humble YTS junior gardener, starting off with a very small tool-box, one can of petrol and a standard issue Campari 'Lawn Master' motor mower. He said Gardensoft was a brand new publishing house that looked set to carve quite a niche for itself in the simulations market with a spring-cleaning game, a washing-up simulator and a launderette game in the pipeline.





» The Codemasters class of 1997 smile for the camera



» Dizzy is easily Codemasters most iconic character



for the console using a basic development kit that didn't allow much memory or graphics. It was shown off at the Consumer Electronic Show in Las Vegas in 1990 to much applause, which encouraged Codemasters to improve the development kit, asking the Olivers to work on *Fantasy World Dizzy* – aka *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* – and *Grand Prix Simulator*.

Of the two, *Grand Prix Simulator* was not released. There had been problems with Atari who said the game was too similar to *Super Sprint*. But there was an even bigger headache. To create games for the NES, Codemasters had to get around the lockout Neg-5 chip, created by Nintendo to prevent unlicensed developers from publishing games for the NES. Codemasters could not get a license from Nintendo so decided to add a bypass chip to each cartridge it made. This pushed up the production costs of the cartridge, so Codemasters' boffins put their thinking caps on and came up with the Aladdin Deck Enhancer that was manufactured in the USA by Camerica.

It was a device that plugged into the NES, containing a by-pass chip and all of the standard gadgetry included in a typical console cartridge. The idea was that Codemasters would produce simple, cheap cartridges containing just the game ROM that would plug into the Aladdin.

The Codemasters game *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk* – retitled *Dizzy The Adventurer* – was bundled with the Aladdin. But Codemasters' dream of cracking America's NES market with this device crashed since low sales and a user base moving to the SNES and Sega Mega Drive, meant Camerica ended up closing down in 1993.

"We were just unable to get a license from Nintendo," says David. "I had gone to the Consumer Electronic Show with the intention of speaking to Nintendo, but the guys there were not interested in discussions. Licensing at the time was a new way of working. People had, on the home computers, been encouraged to programme because it was open architecture. But Nintendo's practise was restrictive. Instead, we went it alone. The profit margins used to be tiny; it would cost more and take longer to manufacture cartridges – 90 days as opposed to seven for tapes, so it was certainly a different market for us."

And then came the *Game Genie*, an innovation that could have destroyed Codemasters (see boxout) and led to another round of battles with Nintendo. After years of fighting the Japanese firm, it was heartening for the Darlings to be invited to London by Sony for discussions about a new console: the PlayStation. Codemasters was firmly established and so became one of the first publishers in Europe to be licensed by Sony. David says he relished the chance to work on the console and utilise its 3D capabilities. And why? "It fitted in with what we wanted to do. The reality associated with simulations meant we wanted to work in 3D…" It was not entirely surprising that one of its first games would be the simulation *Colin McRae Rally*.

Codemasters has continued to grow since then, making titles for the Sony and Nintendo and looking forward to creating games

CODEMASTERS HAD INCURRED NINTENDO'S WRATH ON TWO OCCASIONS: THE FIRST BY BYPASSING THE NES'S LOCKOUT CHIP AND THE SECOND BY PRODUCING THE GAME GENIE

FIGHT, FIGHT!

The *Game Genie* was a cheat device, which sat between a cartridge and Nintendo console, allowing players to enter codes that would have a variety of effects such as infinite lives or ammunition or the ability to skip levels.

But Nintendo dragged Codemasters through the American courts for copyright infringement, claiming that it was altering the games without permission. After four-years of frequent appeals by Nintendo, Codemasters eventually won and was awarded nearly £10m for loss of earnings.

David says: "With court cases, you never know which way it will go and, every time we won, Nintendo would appeal and our international copyright lawyers would tell us Nintendo's case was not strong. From a moral perspective we wanted to win. People could take the *Game Genie* and a *Mario* game and do what they wanted with it and we felt they should be allowed to do that."



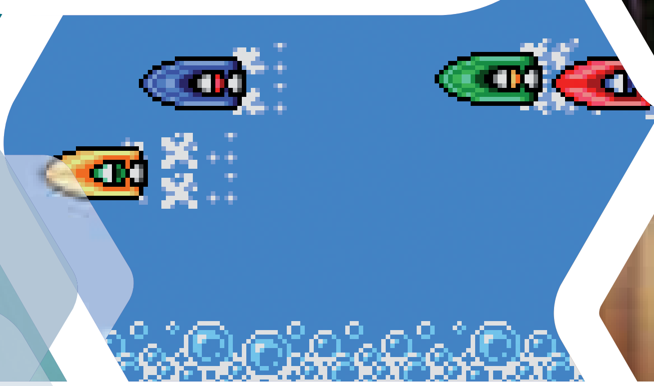
» A very picturesque Codemasters HQ, but where are the snowmen?



» Two players on one Game Boy. Genius!

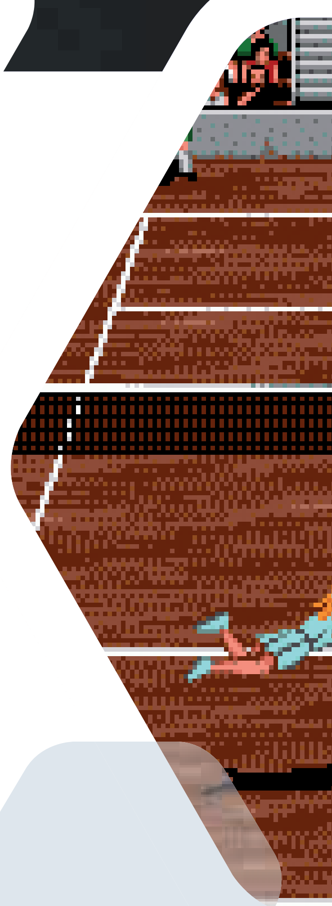






» Richard Darling (above), Andrew Oliver (right) and David Darling (below)





THE OLIVER TWINS

The Oliver Twins were an integral part of Codemasters' success, creating classics including *Grand Prix Simulator*, *Robin Hood* and *Dizzy*.

Now Philip and Andrew Oliver are the bosses of Blitz Games but here Philip looks back at their time with the Codies.

"We first met Richard and David Darling at the European Computer Trade Show in London in September 1985. We had just decided to take a year out from going to university to make a career out of writing games and they were two guys of our own age to whom we had an instant connection, as they were games developers too. They offered us £10,000 for our first game *Super Robin Hood* and we were staggered – up until then we'd been getting only hundreds of pounds for our games.

Working with Codemasters was a fantastic, enjoyable and very efficient relationship. We wrote the games fast and efficiently, they sold a lot of copies of them and paid us the agreed royalties. They liked what we did and respected our game decisions, and we liked what they did and they became good friends. In 1987, Codemasters had a 20 per cent share of the UK games market and it was estimated that almost half their sales were from mine and Andrew's games meaning that seven per cent of all games sold in the UK were written by Andrew and me working in a back bedroom with no staff.

This was a time when we were cracking out games at one a month and every one was going straight to the top of the charts – these were the *Dizzy* and simulator years. When we moved from writing Amstrad and Spectrum games to the Nintendo NES console in 1989 we took up residence at Codemasters offices – portable cabins at the back of their farm buildings!

They supplied the development kits and other developers were on hand to seek advice from. This obviously became much more sociable and therefore fun, but also much less efficient and sadly less satisfying ultimately – but times were changing and we had to change with them.

The changes meant Andrew and I were too busy to take advantage of all the opportunities that were spread before us. Therefore it was all agreed that Big Red should do *Dizzy IV* – entitled *Magicland Dizzy* with our input. It was OK, but then they did *Dizzy Prince Of The Yolkfolk* with almost no input from us and it perfectly captured the spirit of *Dizzy* and I believe was one of the best *Dizzy* games. Several years later we ended up employing most of the Big Red employees as they were based in Leamington and their company ran into difficulties.

Looking back though, the attempts to break into the 16-bit market (Mega Drive, ST & Amiga) caused growing pains and frustrations for both the Darlings and us. We had to move to employing people, and they had to increase investments in the games and the sales operation in the US."

for the next generation consoles. It now has more than 400 employees and a turnover of over £50m.

In 1998, Codemasters was named Publisher Of The Year by Edge magazine and then in 2000, David was named UK Entrepreneur Of The Year. At that time, Codemasters was Britain's second fastest growing company according to the Sunday Times/PriceWaterhouse Profit Track 100 league.

But there has been some heartache. *Colin McRae Rally* was scrapped for the Dreamcast and 98 Codemasters staff were axed in 2001 following, for the first time in its history, an operating loss of £900,000. To look at the Darlings, however, it's hard to tell that they are multi-millionaires. With his friendly demeanour and casual appearance, David has an air of Richard Branson about him. He's also daring – enjoying snowboarding holidays and occasional bungee jumps. Furthermore, he has a private pilot license for multi-engined planes and helicopters.

Brother Richard, aged 39, has a family and is the quieter of the two. And, of course, both brothers are flying high when the likes of other British stalwarts such as Ocean and US Gold have bit the dust.

Much of that is due to their sound business acumen – snapping up the licences of Sensible Software and Sierra On-line were shrewd moves. It is no wonder Richard and David Darling were inducted into the ELSPA Hall Of Fame in 2003, becoming only the second recipients of the award.

As ELSPA's director general Roger Bennett said at the time: "Richard and David took a teenage hobby and transformed it into Codemasters, a hugely successful business that has won many awards and works with the best development and games publishing talent and has an impressive portfolio of massively popular videogames."

Codemasters is a true British success story.



SOFTOGRAPHY

1986

Terra Cognita C64
Super Robin Hood Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Mr Angry C64
Necris Dome Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Vampire Amstrad, C64
Danger Zone C16

1987

Brainache Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Thunderbolt C64
Ghost Hunters Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Grand Prix Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Armourdillo Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
BMX Simulator Amstrad, Atari, C64, Spectrum
Dizzy Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Cosmonaut Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Guardian Angel, The A mstrad, C64, Spectrum
Professional Ski Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Lazer Force C64
Ghost Hunters Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Grand Prix Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Super G-Man Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Star Runner Spectrum
Transmuter Amstrad, Atari
White Heat Spectrum

1988

Twin Turbo V8 Amstrad
International Speedway Amstrad, C64, Spectrum re-release
3D Star Fighter Amstrad, Spectrum
Super Dragon Slayer C64
International Rugby Simulator C64
SAS Combat Simulator C64
Big Foot Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Advanced Pinball Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Death Stalker Amstrad, Spectrum
Hit Squad Amstrad, Spectrum
Fruit Machine Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Poltergeist C64
Super Stuntman Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Superhero Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Blade Warrior Amstrad, Spectrum
Jet Bike Simulator Amstrad, Spectrum

1989

KGB Superspy C64, Spectrum
Bronx Street Cop Spectrum, Amstrad
Supercar Trans-Am Spectrum, Amstrad
Billy The Kid Spectrum, Amstrad
Jungle Warfare Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Mission Jupiter Amstrad, Spectrum
Operation Gunship Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Rockstar Ate My Hamster Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Bounty Hunter Amstrad, Spectrum
Super Tank Simulator C64
PowerBoat Simulator C64
Grand Prix Simulator 2 Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Ninja Massacre Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Olli & Lisa 3 Amstrad, C64
Mig 29 Soviet Fighter Amstrad, C64
Monte Carlo Casino Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Pub Trivia Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
RallyCross Simulator System: C64
Motocross Amstrad, C64
Fast Food Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
4 Soccer Simulators Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
BMX Freestyle Simulator Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
BMX Simulator II: Dirt Biking Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Bubble Dizzy Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Dizzy: Fantasy World Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Turbo Chopper Simulator Amstrad
Dizzy: Treasure Island Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Grand Prix Simulator 2 Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Wizard Willy C64
Pro Skateboard Simulator Amstrad, C64
Mig 29 Soviet Fighter Amstrad, C64
Street Gang Football Amstrad, Spectrum

1990

Pro Tennis Simulator Amstrad, Spectrum, C64, Amiga, Atari ST
Kamikaze Spectrum, C64
Prince Clumsy C64
Pro Boxing Simulator Amstrad, C64
Fruit Machine Simulator 2 Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Kwik Snax Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Fruit Machine Simulator 2 Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Little Puff In Dragonland C64
Tilt Spectrum, C64
Quattro compilations Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Pro Golf Simulator Amstrad, Spectrum
F16 Fighting Falcon

1991

Mountain Bike Simulator Amstrad, Spectrum
Spike In Transylvania Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Grand Prix Amiga, Atari ST, PC
Sky High Stuntman C64
Slightly Magic C64
Spikey In Transylvania Amstrad, C64
Panic Dizzy Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Dizzy: Magic Land Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Dizzy: Spellbound Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
CJ In The USA C64
Mean Machine C64
Miami Chase C64
Tarzan Goes Ape! Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
CJ Elephant Antics C64
Micro Machines NES, Amiga, CD-i, PC, Game Boy, Game Gear, Mega Drive, Sega Master System, SNES
Tornado ECR Spectrum
Dizzy The Adventurer NES
Robin Hood – Legend Quest Amiga, Atari ST

1992

1st Division Manager Amstrad, Spectrum, C64, Atari ST, Amiga
Bee 52 C64, NES
Hoversprint Amiga, Atari ST
Imperial Wizard Amiga, Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Captain Dynamo Amstrad, C64, Spectrum, Amiga, Atari ST
Dizzy: Crystal Kingdom Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Dizzy: Down The Rapids Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
DJ Puffs Volcanic Capers Amstrad, C64
Grell & Falla Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Murray Mouse – Supercop C64
Slicks C64
Steg the Slug C64
Super Seymour Amstrad, C64
Soccer Pinball Amstrad, C64
Seymour in Hollywood C64
Seymour Stuntman Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Wacky Darts C64
Demon Slayer Spectrum
Bignose's American Adventures C64, Spectrum

1993

Wrestling Superstars Amstrad, C64, Spectrum
Sink or Swim Mega Drive. Game Gear

1994

Pete Sampras Tennis Mega Drive, Game Gear

1998

Colin McRae Rally PlayStation, PC
Music PlayStation

2000

Cannon Fodder Game Boy Color

2001

Racing & Sports Classic Bundle PC
Colin McRae Rally 2.0 Platinum PlayStation
Snooker Value Series PlayStation
MTV Music Generator 2 PlayStation 2
Operation Flashpoint PC
TWTC Platinum PlayStation
World Championship Snooker 2002 PlayStation 2
Insane Best Sellers PC
Severance Best Sellers PC
Colin 2.0 Best Sellers PC
Snooker Best Sellers PC
TOCA 2 Best Sellers PC
Music 2000 Best Sellers PC
LMA Manager 2002 PlayStation
Operation Flashpoint Gold Upgrade PC
Operation Flashpoint Gold Edition PC

2002

MTV Music Generator 2 Re-launch PlayStation 2
LMA Manager 2002 PlayStation 2
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing PlayStation 2
Operation Flashpoint Resistance PC
Soldier Of Fortune PlayStation 2
Mike Tyson Heavyweight Boxing Xbox
Prisoner Of War PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
Star Trek Voyager – Elite Force PlayStation 2
TOCA Race Driver PlayStation 2
Colin McRae Rally 3 PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
LMA Manager 2003 PlayStation 2, Xbox
Operation Flashpoint Game Of The Year PC
Lomu And Lara Double Pack PlayStation
Rally 2 & Biking Double Pack PlayStation
TWTC & Rally Double Pack PlayStation

2003

IGI-2 – Covert Strike PC
TOCA Race Driver PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
IndyCar Series PlayStation 2, Xbox
World Championship Snooker 2003 PlayStation 2, Xbox
IndyCar Series PC
Colin McRae Rally 4 PlayStation 2, Xbox
Club Football (various teams) PlayStation 2, Xbox
Pop Idol PlayStation 2, PC, GBA
Operation Flashpoint GOTY Bestseller PC
TOCA Race Driver Live Xbox
World Championship Snooker 2003 PC
Downhill Domination PlayStation 2

2004

LMA Manager 2004 PlayStation 2, Xbox
Colin McRae Rally 4 PC
TOCA Race Driver 2 PC, Xbox
England International Football PS2, Xbox
Perimeter PC
MTV Music Generator 3 PlayStation 2, Xbox
World Championship Snooker 2004 PlayStation 2, Xbox
Indy Car Series 2005 PlayStation 2, Xbox
Soldiers: Heroes Of WWII PC
Second Sight PlayStation 2, Xbox, GameCube, PC
Colin McRae Rally 2005 PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
Club Football 2005 (various clubs) PlayStation 2, Xbox, PC
TOCA Race Driver 2 PlayStation 2
LMA Manager 2005 PlayStation 2, Xbox
LMA Professional Manager 2005 PC
Manchester United Manager 2005 PlayStation 2, Xbox

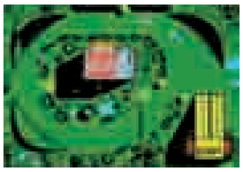
2005

Downhill Domination Band 2 PlayStation 2
LMA 2005 Stats Update PlayStation 2
Street Racing Syndicate PlayStation 2, Xbox
Asherons Call 2 PC

Timeline

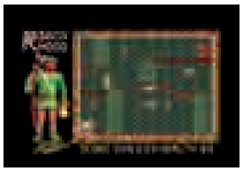
Well where do you start with Codemasters? Its simulator titles alone would easily fill these two pages, and that's before you even consider hits like the Dizzy franchise. So here's a small selection for you to enjoy

1986



BMX SIMULATOR
Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari 8-bit, Atari ST, Commodore 64, MSX, ZX Spectrum

Coded by Richard Darling, *BMX Simulator* debuted on the Commodore 64 and was the first game that Codemasters ever published. Similar in style to Atari's *Super Sprint*, Richard had swapped racing cars for BMXs and thrown in some wincing crashes. It's currently available on Codemasters' website, so check it out at http://www.codemasters.co.uk/downloads/?downloadid=16554.



SUPER ROBIN HOOD
Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum

Not only was this a rather solid platformer, *Super Robin Hood* also marked the beginning of Codemasters' relationship with the Oliver Twins – a partnership that lasted for eight years. Featuring bold, chunky graphics, impressive (for the time) digitised speech and plenty of platforming, *Super Robin Hood* was well worthy of your £1.99.

1987



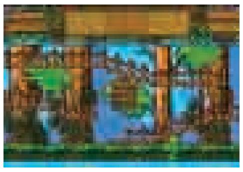
DIZZY **Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum**

Of course we're going to mention *Dizzy*. It is, after all, one of the biggest franchises that Codemasters owns (along with the Oliver Twins who share 50% rights). Dubbed as "the ultimate cartoon adventure" *Dizzy* was a clever arcade adventure that was only let down by one particularly annoying jump, that spelled the end of the game if you mistimed it. Doh.



GRAND PRIX SIMULATOR **Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum**

Codemasters loved its simulator games, which were about as lifelike as the waxworks at Louis Tussauds, and after the success of *BMX Simulator* it was hardly surprising that the Oliver Twins turned up with another (admittedly very good) *Super Sprint* game. Great gameplay made up for the crude visuals and dodgy digitised speech.



TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY **Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, NES, ZX Spectrum**

It's hard to mention Codemasters and not discuss *Dizzy*, so here's another one to add to the list. Whilst *Treasure Island Dizzy* didn't feature any instant death scenarios and gave you the ability to carry three things at once, it was rather hard due to you only having one life. Everyone loved it though and it became an instant hit.

1988



ROCKSTAR ATE MY HAMSTER **Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum**

Excellent parody that has you playing a small time manager with dreams of making it big in the music industry. Starting off with next to nothing, you have to form your band (or stick with a solo musician) create singles and albums and eventually perform in sell-outs. What really makes *Rockstar* though is the outrageous caricatures and over-the-top news headlines. Sheer genius.

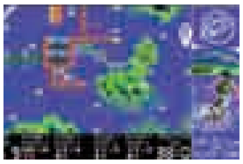


SUPER STUNTMAN
Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum

With so many releases it was inevitable that Codemasters would release the odd stinker, and *Super Stuntman* is an example. While the concept is okay: act as a stuntman and take part in action sequences, the dull and plodding gameplay kills any enjoyment the game offers.

THE RACE AGAINST TIME **Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum**

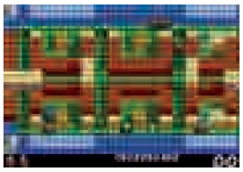
Inspired by Bob Geldolf's Sport Aid, Codemasters asked the Oliver Twins to create a game that would capture the spirit of the event. Using the *Dizzy* engine, you took control of a runner who had to travel around the world and light beacons. It played well enough, but with Codemasters wanting to give all profits to charity it wasn't exactly a huge hit. It was also the first of the Codemasters Plus games, which, priced at £5.99, was far more expensive than other Codemasters titles.



JET BIKE SIMULATOR
Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum

Inspired by a summer holiday, the Oliver Twins *Jet Bike Simulator* was another top down *Super Sprint* clone, which, by the time it was released, was beginning to feel a little old hat. Despite featuring a range of nicely designed courses and solid controls, the identikit gameplay was beginning to grate. It was also the second (and last game) that marked Codemasters' new plus range.

1989



FAST FOOD **Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum**

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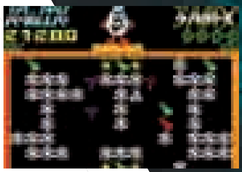
With the *Dizzy* adventure games proving to be such a huge hit for the Oliver twins, Dizzy soon found himself appearing in a variety of different arcade games that were often based on past classic hits. *Fast Food*, a derivative *Pac-Man* rip-off is definitely one of the weaker efforts and lacks the charm and style of Dizzy's normal outings.



THE CD GAMES PACK
Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum

A highly innovative effort from Codemasters that effectively enabled you to link your Spectrum up to a CD player and play a variety of classic hits off a CD instead of the slow-ass tape recorder. Featuring a staggering 30 games, including *Dizzy, BMX Simulator, Super G Man* and *Grand Prix Simulator II*, and weighing in at a perfectly reasonable £19.99, the compilation never did as well as it should – mainly, as according to the twins, most people had moved onto the 16-bit systems.

1990-91



1990

KWIK SNAX
Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, DOS, ZX Spectrum

After the crushingly dull *Fast Food*, *Kwik Snax* was a welcome return to form and would have been a superb puzzler with or without Dizzy's involvement. Based on the classic arcade game *Pengo*, *Kwik Snax* is a highly addictive title that still holds up today. We'd love to see it on the DS.



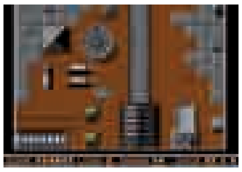
GAME GENIE **Game Boy, Game Gear, NES, MD, SNES**

While not an actual game, the inclusion of the *Game Genie* is worthy of discussion as it sparked off a bitter legal battle between Nintendo and Codemasters. Nintendo felt that the *Game Genie* was a breach of copyright and halted its production for a short time in the US. The device continued to sell well in Canada and after US law decided to rule in favour of Galoob it appeared on later Nintendo and Sega consoles.



DIZZY COLLECTION
Amstrad CPC, Commodore 64, ZX Spectrum

Dizzy popped up in a fair few compilations over the years, but this was easily our favourite. While *Fast Food* is included, the fact that *Dizzy, Treasure Island Dizzy, Fantasy World Dizzy* and *Magicland Dizzy* were all included made the dull *Pac-Man* clone easier to bear.



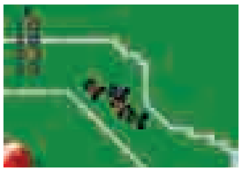
VIOLATOR **Amiga, Atari ST**

Obviously inspired by the *Silkworm* games, *Violator* was a by-the-numbers shoot-'em-up that saw you flying a helicopter over a variety of dull, by-the-numbers environments, while collecting by-the-numbers power-ups. Only available for the 16-bit shooters, even the most avid shoot-'em-up fan will find *Violator* hard going. One to avoid.



CRYSTAL KINGDOM DIZZY **Amiga, Amstrad CPC, Atari ST, Commodore 64, PC DOS ZX Spectrum**

As *Dizzy*'s fame continued to spread, the Codies decided to do an Ultimate and released his eighth adventure at £9.99. While there was no denying that Dizzy's new adventure was extremely polished, it received mixed reviews from various magazines and wasn't as successful as previous outings, possibly because it was five times more expensive than most other *Dizzy* games and was effectively more of the same.



MICRO MACHINES
CDi, DOS, Game Boy, Game Gear, Master System, Mega Drive, NES, SNES

While Codemasters had a number of hits on Sega's Mega Drive, it's this racer that many will remember most fondly. Based on the mini vehicles that were popular at the time, races took place in locations such as snooker tables, bedrooms, gardens and baths and allowed you to control everything from boats to Formula 1 cars. Inventive track design and a super multi-player mode ensured that *Micro Machines* became a massive success.



PETE SAMPRAS TENNIS
Mega Drive

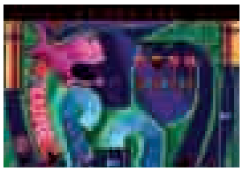
Released in 1994 and spawning two fun sequels, *Pete Sampras Tennis* not only emulated the sport very well, but was also the first Mega Drive cartridge to boast two additional joystick ports. This effectively meant that you could have four-player matches without the need of an expensive add-on. Featuring great animation and plenty of gameplay modes, *Sampras* was a great alternative to those who lacked a SNES and subsequently, *Super Tennis*.

1 9 9 2 - 4



MICRO MACHINES 2: TURBO TOURNAMENT
Mega Drive

Only available for Sega's Mega Drive, this update of *Micro Machines 2* not only featured Codemasters' J-Cart system but also came with a stunning array of different multi-player modes, making it one of the ultimate party games for when your friends were around. Indeed, providing there were enough of you, it was possible to have eight player games, with two people sharing each joypad. Wowzers.



PSYCHO PINBALL
DOS, Mega Drive

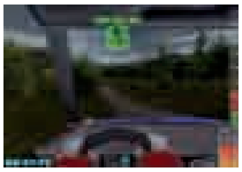
Utterly wonderful pinball game that was a serious rival to Technosoft's excellent *Devil Crash* and still gets played by us today. Featuring superb physics, four cunningly designed tables, lavish visuals and a rather cute armadillo, *Psycho Pinball* was a superb title that successfully mimicked (and in our minds improved on) Digital Eclipse's famous *Pinball* trilogy.

1 9 9 5



TOCA TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP
PlayStation, Windows

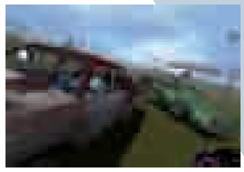
Frightfully realistic take on the British *TOCA* series that we're absolutely rubbish at and still have trouble with. Universally praised for its realistic damage modelling, excellent physics and amazing attention to detail, Codemasters' racer was an excellent alternative to the likes of *Sega Rally*, but needed a lot of perseverance if you wanted to master it.



COLIN MCRAE RALLY
PlayStation, Windows

Realistic rally game that pushed the genre further than anything that had come before it. While it wasn't the most spectacular looking game around, the finely honed gameplay, realistic physics and excellent speech from your co-driver meant that this was the most authentic rally experience around. Little wonder then that after eight years the sixth game in the series, *Colin McRae DIRT*, is now on its way.

1 9 9 7 - 8



1NSANE **Windows**

Whilst *1NSANE* appeared to be just another Codemasters car game, the difference was that it focused on allowing the player to explore huge non-linear environments whilst engaging in all sorts of different multi-player games. Indeed, gear heads could take part in everything from "capture the flag" to a free-for-all destruction zone, and while it never received spectacular reviews, it still proved to be a lot of fun.



LMA MANAGER 2002
PlayStation, PlayStation 2

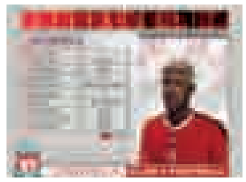
While it's never been able to compete with Sports Interactive's excellent *Championship/Football Manager* series, there are plenty of fans that are prepared to sing *LMA*'s praises. It's not the most in-depth management game ever made, so is easily accessible to those gamers who just fancy a quick dabble.



PRISONER OF WAR
PlayStation 2, Windows, Xbox

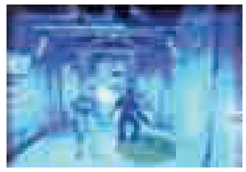
Prisoner Of War had the potential to be huge, but somewhere along the way it turned into a dull plodding adventure. Taking on the role of a shot down American pilot, the idea was to escape from the German prison camp you had been incarcerated in. If this all sounds familiar that's because it was essentially an updated version of Denton Design's excellent *The Great Escape*, albeit an update that was nowhere near as good.

2 0 0 0 - 2



CLUB FOOTBALL
PlayStation, Xbox

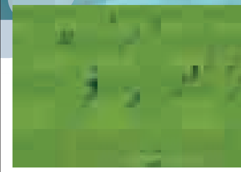
Here's an idea. Everyone has their favourite football team, so why not release club editions of your new footy title? Initially launching with the choice of 17 different teams, *Club Football* was an idea that was unable to compete against the dominance of *FIFA* and *Pro Evolution Soccer*, while a sequel was released in 2004 (with a total of 21 different teams) no other follow-ups have been announced.



SECOND SIGHT
GameCube, PlayStation 2, Windows, Xbox

An original idea from the creators of *TimeSplitters*, *Second Sight* was overshadowed by Midway's far superior *Psi-Ops*. This in itself is a real shame, as while it's nowhere near as enjoyable to play, it arguably has a much better and more adult storyline.

2 0 0 3 - 4



SENSIBLE SOCCER 2006
PlayStation 2, Windows, Xbox

After a nine-year break, *Sensible Soccer* returned with creator Jon Hare in tow to challenge the *FIFA*s and *Pro Evos* that now dominate the genre. Sadly, results were rather mixed, and for every reviewer that praised the refreshingly simple gameplay mechanics, just as many felt that teleporting goalkeepers and oversized heads didn't belong in the game of two halves.



MICRO MACHINES V4
Nintendo DS, PlayStation 2, PSP, Windows

Excellent 3D update that perfectly captures the spirit of the original games and proves that the diminutive racing franchise still has what it takes. While the visuals are rather drab in places, the sheer amount of different vehicles you can drive, excellent courses and insanely addictive multi-player easily makes up for it. A superb return to form for the classic franchise.

2 0 0 6

IT'S CASTLEVANIA ON THE PC98. WAIT A MINUTE… NO IT'S NOT!

RUSTY

Sometimes Eastern treasures can be found in strange guises. This month we look at C-Lab's *Rusty*, a title that shamelessly copies Konami's *Castlevania* series. Though it fails to win us over in the originality stakes, *Rusty* is a great imitation of a great series, rewarding our travels East.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** C-LAB
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** NEC PC98
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE FOR:** N/A
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50 (YAHOO! JAPAN)
- » **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** *SUPER CASTLEVANIA IV* (SNES)

Of all the *Castlevania* games, *Rusty* borrows most from *IV* on the SNES (which thankfully had a PAL release), so this would be the closest alternative (and vice-versa of course). They both contain exactly the same style of whip-swinging, stair-climbing and enemy-busting action as each other. Naturally though the level layouts and character designs are wholly different, which is why the one game compliments the other so nicely. *Castlevania IV* is a bit easier too.



Interesting fact
Rusty was neither the first nor last game by C-Lab (they remained obscure, developing for PC98, Mac and Windows), but it's certainly its most interesting. They also released a Mah-jong title for PSOne in 1998 (pictured).

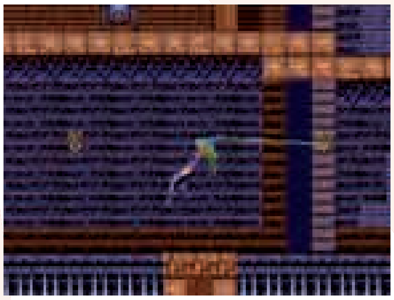


» Poychi Robo lied about there being no nudity – small pixelised boobies are clearly visible here

メガ駆動機構 **What can you do when you're a huge *Castlevania* fan and have exhausted all your possibilities by playing every title released in the series (including imports and the rubbish ones)?** The answer is to look Eastward, trying to find one of Japan's *Castlevania* clones which went unreleased in the West. Doing so you would discover the almost unheard of *Rusty* by C-Lab, released for NEC's PC-9801 home-computer (and apparently also DOS computers) in 1993. The PC-98 was a Japan-only 16-bit home computer which originally came out in 1982, over the years being modified and enhanced so that there are now countless variations. Despite not reaching the West, it did have several prominent releases.

What makes *Rusty* interesting, especially to fans of the system, is that when trawling through a big box of second-hand PC-98 games it's easy to be inundated with pornographic quest games, and adventure titles that contain gratuitous nudity. So finding not only an excellent *Castlevania*-inspired action game but one that is also (mostly) devoid of nakedness, is something special. Admittedly it's not entirely sanitised, there's the customary women-in-extremely-tight-leather-outfits found in so many Japanese games, but it's not something you'd get fired for playing during a lunch break.

Rusty begins with a lengthy cutscene of static images explaining the storyline – something about local women being kidnapped by a vampiric demon overlord, for depraved purposes, with our green-haired heroine *Rusty* being the only one who can save them. After each of the game's 10 levels (which include a nightmarish boss at the end) have been conquered, there are



» Mastering the ability to swing from hooks is essential to progress – much like in *Castlevania*



» Any game that tries to replicate *Castlevania* must contain a church with stained glass windows – it's the law



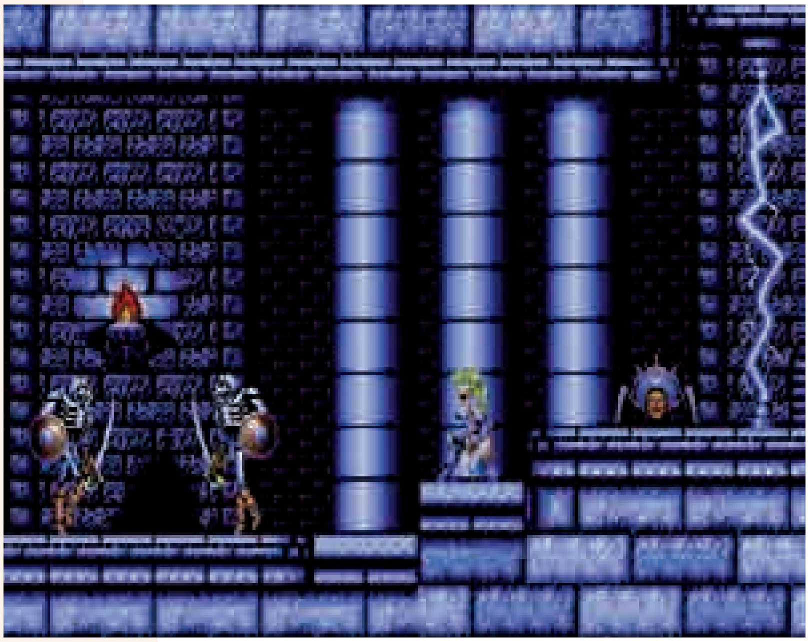
» Throughout the game there are high-resolution and brightly coloured cutscenes such as this

further cutscenes showing the young anime woman you've just rescued.

The similarities to *Castlevania* (or rather the fact that it was totally ripped off) become apparent prior to the start of the first level, with the introduction of a gradually expanding map screen that depicts an almost medieval-esque landscape reminiscent of *Transylvania*. Suddenly you're stranded inside a village devoid of human life but infested with vile fiends. Just like the title it draws inspiration from, you must destroy enemies by whipping them, while traversing platforms, climbing ropes and stairs, finding keys to unlock doors (which are based on playing card symbols), defeating freakish bosses, and swinging from hooks with your whip. While the screen's scrolling may not have been quite as smooth, all of the core gameplay mechanics for *Rusty* were copied ad hoc from *Castlevania* in order to replicate it's style, atmosphere, pacing, and overall mood. There are other similarities too, such as featuring a church, waterfall, and underground caverns, while the most obviously copied stage is a lengthy clock-tower section, replete with turning gears in the background. Even the music is the same eclectic blend of classical piano, upbeat pop-synth, and electric guitar. Despite having a very similar tempo and general tune, C-Lab's renditions aren't of the same astounding calibre as Konami's – though some would no doubt be fooled in a blind comparison test.

The major difference between the two titles is the level structure and layout (*Rusty* is the more difficult game), plus the enemy and boss designs. While *Castlevania*'s enemies were nearly all of mythical origin (Medusa, Death, Dracula etc), those fought here are unique and have been designed specifically for the game. The first level ends with a topless vixen who has been fused into what resembles a flying dragon/turtle hybrid. Later stages have more women fused into various creatures, such as a lengthy Naga and hellishly deformed spider. The art design for these is clever and makes excellent use of the limited colour palette. As well as setting *Rusty* apart from what it imitates, thereby keeping the formula fairly fresh, it also adds a much needed sense of discovery seeing what unusual demonic minions are in the next level.

This is good since the game can be infuriatingly difficult, despite having unlimited continues and a save option (when it's Game Over, the first option in the small menu allows you to continue, while second choice lets you save and return to the title screen). This desire to see the next area ensures you return despite the challenge posed. Sticking with it also reveals deeper elements: each level has myriad hidden areas and secret items to be discovered, some of which include secondary weapons such as an owl who follows you and attacks on command.



» An electrically charged underground shrine, filled with these rather weak skeletal soldiers

The obvious reason for *Rusty* never reaching the UK is that the native hardware never made it here; why Konami never contested it is anyone's guess. Being a limited release from a fringe developer most likely made them lax; they probably don't even know it exists. If you want to experience this oddity for yourself, copies show up on Yahoo! Japan Auctions for around £50. A working PC-98 will be tougher to source though, so emulation is the easiest option (anex86 with Japanese fonts). It never took hold of the market when released, but *Rusty* remains an unusual and surprisingly fun rip-off of a renowned classic.



私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある



THE MAKING OF...

LAZY JONES

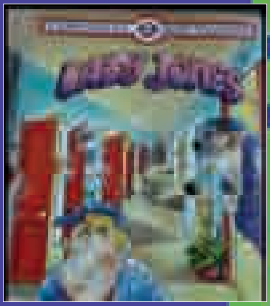
A veritable legend in the field of videogame soundtracks who continues to write and perform to this day, David Whittaker is a firm favourite amongst retro-gaming fans and one of the most respected composers of the era. Many are unaware, however, that this Commodore SID chip maestro occasionally turned his hand to programming entire games by himself and often goes unrecognised as an equally-accomplished designer of complete releases. One such example was the seminal C64 title Lazy Jones, released in the early Eighties. Robert Mellor dutifully skives off doing real work to look back on this cult classic, charting its influence on modern electronic music and talking to David Whittaker himself about the making of this cult title.

Published in 1984 on the Terminal Software label, David Whittaker's *Lazy Jones* was a prime example of the one-man programming state-of-mind that existed back in the halcyon days of videogame entertainment. In a title that well and truly galvanized the concept of the 'game within a game' format, players take on the role of the eponymous character in his quest to bunk off work in a variety of entertaining manners. A baseball cap-wearing hotel caretaker, Jones inhabits a playing area that consists of three separate floors, all of which can be accessed via an elevator in the centre of the screen. Each of these floors contains a bad guy determined to halt Jones' pursuit of a good time, including a hotel security guard, a businessman replete with bowler-hat and an out-of-control shopping cart. Fortunately for the

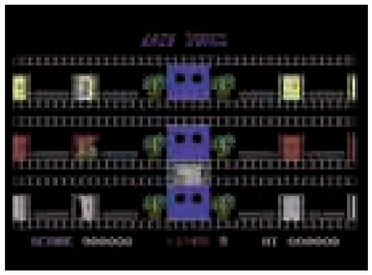
IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** TERMINAL SOFTWARE
» **DEVELOPER:** DAVID WHITTAKER
» **RELEASED:** 1984
» **GENRE:** PLATFORMER/MINI-GAME
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+



"I WAS REALLY JUST TRYING TO COME-UP WITH ANOTHER MANIC MINER; ALMOST EVERYTHING WAS PLAGIARISED" DAVID WHITTAKER



» Boarding the elevator gives you access to all three floors

anti-hero of the piece, each floor also contains a succession of doors, all of which can be accessed with the greatest of ease and lead to a cornucopia of time-wasting pleasures. The primary features of the various rooms form the main objective of the title, containing a multitude of sub-games set up on a miniature C64 and giant monitor that house a wide selection of classics that vary depending on which door is entered. From original designs such as the "kiss-chase"-inspired 99 Red Balloons to a smattering of arcade machine knock-offs such as *Breakout* and *Defender*, each game can be enjoyed for a limited period before it's once again time to brave the perilous hallways and search for another diversion from the character's janitorial duties. Added to the many game rooms are a selection of bonus rounds that pop up intermittently, ranging from a bar-room sequence where Jones attempts to "score" a drink from the bartender, to the comedic "Lazy Nightmare" where forty winks in one of the hotel beds yields a terrifying dream of the baddies that await in the hallways.

While not completely original in practice or groundbreaking in any conceptual way, it is the execution of *Lazy Jones* that delivers immeasurable charm and keeps the player coming back for more. Apart from the odd one here and there that goes on for too long and becomes frustrating, the majority of the sub-games are highly enjoyable and offer a surprising amount of replay value despite the fact the title just loops eternally and has no real end or objective other than playing miniature renditions of popular retro classics. The game is bright, colourful and interesting from a visual perspective, while the sticky nature of the controls can be forgiven when taking into account the many sprinklings of hilarity interspersed throughout. Unquestionably the highlight is the gloriously progressive SID chip soundtrack that changes accordingly depending on which room is entered. Containing both Whittaker's own memorable compositions and a healthy selection of plagiarised pop chart hits of the early/mid-Eighties, the score itself has attained legendary status and even eclipsed the game from which it stems, remaining a favourite with remixers to this day.

WHITTAKER TALKS

A genuine legend in the field and one of the most talented and revered musicians/programmers of the retro era, David Whittaker remains incredibly productive and subsequently extremely in-demand to this day. Notoriously elusive and difficult to contact, Retro Gamer undertook the detective work undaunted and managed to pin David down for five minutes to talk about the making of his 1984 chestnut.

Despite his notoriety as a soundtrack specialist, David Whittaker has fond memories of creating an entire game by himself in the early stages of his career as he admits: "Yes, I really liked working on it – as I always thought I was a better programmer than a musician." When asked about the conceptual origins of the title, and whether it was a sly satirical commentary on young people preferring to avoid doing real work in favour of playing videogames he simply replies: "Nope, nothing so deep… I was really just trying



» *Elektra Glide*, like *Lazy Jones*, was most notable for the excellent soundtrack

to come up with another *Manic Miner* – ie multiple games/rooms in one bigger game. Almost everything was plagiarised (as you can tell, with the music)." Indeed, it was this plagiarism that formed a large part of the game's success – on both design and musical fronts – with many familiar, tried-and-tested titles being integrated into the program. As far as the other more unique sections go, such as 99 Red Balloons and the bar sequence, David coyly states: "The others just occurred to me." Aside from the traditional gaming sections, *Lazy Jones* is littered with bonus rooms such as the broom closet and the always-amusing "Lazy Nightmare". As for whether they have any significance or are merely an aesthetic break from the action: "I probably couldn't come up with any more new games, so I suppose it was just an easy way out."

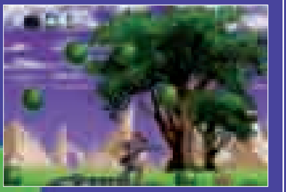
While the C64 would become heavily reliant on multi-load for tape-based games in its later life, *Lazy Jones* was squeezed into a single convenient load, although Whittaker remains a little sketchy on the complexities of how he fit the entire

MUSICAL HIGHLIGHTS

ELEKTRA GLIDE
SYSTEM: COMMODORE 64
YEAR: 1986

PANTHER
SYSTEM: COMMODORE 64
YEAR: 1986

SHADOW OF THE BEAST
SYSTEMS: AMIGA
YEAR: 1989

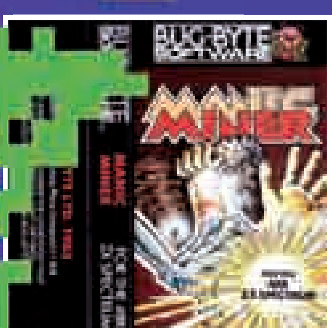


THE MAKING OF... LAZY JONES

THE MAN, THE MYTH, THE LEGEND

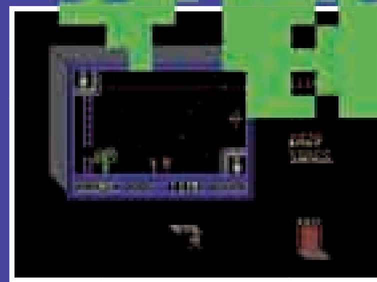
Starting out his career in the early Eighties, David Whittaker began programming games by himself but found his true calling and rose to prominence as a prolific composer, scoring countless classic retro games up until the early 1990s. With initial titles ranging from *Tribbles* (Mr. Micro, 1983) to *Hocus Focus* (Quicksilva, 1986) under his belt, Whittaker began concentrating on music with an emphasis on the C64 and he contributed to essential releases of the era such as *Elektra Glide*, *Beyond The Ice Palace*, *Star Wars*, *Road Blasters*, *Panther* and *Iron Horse*. He later moved on to the 16-bit format after being impressed by the capabilities of the Commodore Amiga, writing music for games such as *Speedball* and *Shadow Of The Beast*. Something of a traditionalist, Whittaker often programmed music directly using a machine code monitor and assembler program, rather than utilising more practical music composition tools. His output continues to this day, concentrating on what he considers to be his specialist area, dialogue, along with sound FX, general ambience and music.





» *Manic Miner*, the influence for Whittaker's multi-game masterpiece

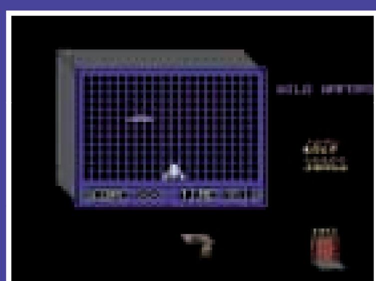
program into one 64K chunk of memory: "I've no idea – I just don't remember. The .T64 file of the game, that I found, is only 34K." The release has one of the most diverse and influential soundtracks ever created on the Commodore's SID chip, with original compositions blending seamlessly with chart hits from the era like Visage's "Fade To Grey", Nena's "99 Red Balloons" and Duran Duran's "The Reflex". Unsurprisingly, David admits to being an admirer of these groups and music from the era in general: "Yes, I was – and have always been – a big Eighties music fan – especially with "synth/electronic" bands." It was an ironic twist, however, that saw David himself being plagiarised at the turn of the millennium when Zombie Nation unleashed their Kernkraft 400 single on the dance charts, and his reaction was initially placid: "At first, I wasn't too bothered. But when it was brought to my attention that there could be some money in it (for me) – I went after him – and won – more than I got for the whole game, I think." A case can be made that Eighties videogame music, particularly that on the Commodore 64 SID chip, has been a huge influence on modern electronic music. There are many parallels stylistically and the people who grew up playing those old games in the Eighties are now the ones in their twenties creating much of today's dance music. Asked about whether he himself has noticed this phenomena, Whittaker takes a cautious stance: "Sorry, but not really... But I know people do tend to like, and stick with, the music that they grew-up with (same as me, with the Eighties stuff)."



» Kiss the girl, grab the balloon, repeat as required



» Not advisable in real life, 'Jay Walk' is one of the game's trickier challenges



» Test your reflexes on 'Wild Wafers'

> "I STILL THINK OF IT AS MY FAVOURITE, AS IT WAS THE MOST FUN TO WORK ON BECAUSE IT WAS SO SIMPLE" DAVID WHITTAKER

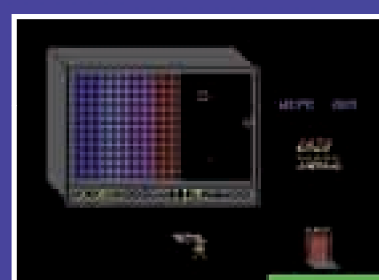
Although the C64 version of *Lazy Jones* is the best-remembered format, there was also a port for the Sinclair Spectrum written by Simon Cobb. The option of eventually transferring the game to a more powerful platform like the Amiga must have been a tantalising one, but sadly the time was not right: "No, there was no 16-bit option at the time as they didn't exist in 1984 and the game was already getting on a bit when the Commodore Amiga hit the scene. I also converted the (whole) game for the Tatung Einstein – and MSX, which was almost identical (to the Einstein)."

Regardless of its obvious influence in various mediums, Whittaker's foray into a multi-game epic remains relatively obscure and forgotten in favour of other titles released around the same time, yet the making of it holds fond memories for him: "I've done better games (I think). But I still think of it as my favourite, as it was the most fun to work on – because it was so simple." When asked if there was anything he felt he failed to accomplish with the game – perhaps a room or two that never made the cut – he appears relatively satisfied with what he achieved: "The only thing that I wish I'd done is scrolling the colours off-screen along with the characters when you go into a game – dunno why I never did that. Also, maybe making the Wipe Out game shorter – it goes on forever (laughs)."

Questioning David if there were ever plans for a sequel gets the response of a resounding "Nope", as does an inquiry into whether he has any unfinished games from the era or projects that never saw the light of day – perhaps alarming for a developer that prolific. He remains productive and incredibly busy to this day, however, working closely with Chris Abbott at www.C64audio.com on musical releases, as well as several big-name current developments: "Aside from the audio releases, my main work is on *Lego*



» Touch the borders and it's back to square one on 'Res Q'



» The '*Breakout*' clone 'Wipe Out' really does go on just a bit too long



» The screen-scroll in full effect



» Game over on 'Star Dust', but there's a possible hit single just around the corner

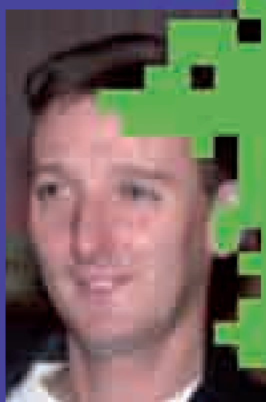
Star Wars 2 (http://www.lucasarts.com/games/legostarwarsii/) and *Bionicle Heroes* (http://www.lego.com/eng/bionicle/Default.aspx). I'm also currently developing *Transformers The Movie* (http://www.hasbro.com/transformers/ and http://www.transformerland.com/transformers-the-movie.html) as well as *Narnia 2* (http://disney.go.com/buenavistagames/narnia/home.html)."

TEARING UP THE CHARTS

Proof-positive (as if it were needed) that the videogame soundtracks of the Eighties have left an indelible imprint on a large quantity of modern electronic-based pop music, Zombie Nation's memorable Kernkraft 400 brought the unmistakable sound of David Whittaker kicking and screaming into the new millennium. The coarsely ethereal grunt of the SID chip formed a perfect marriage with contemporary dance genre production, with the track proving a huge hit single in most territories and becoming a release marred with controversy. Commodore 64 audio expert Chris Abbott relays the story of this infectious chart smash:

"The C64 community was surprised to hear Commodore 64 music on the radio in 2000 courtesy of a one-man dance act by the name of Zombie Nation and his delectable slice of SID chip-inspired madness entitled Kernkraft 400. The track sampled the 'Stardust' level of C64 audio maestro David Whittaker's *Lazy Jones* (Terminal Software). Inspired by a piece remembered from his childhood, German DJ and producer Florian Senfter (aka DJ Splank!) took out a Sid station – a professional synthesizer based around the Commodore 64 SID chip – and created this number 2 chart hit. The original release mix was only due for a 300-copy release, which meant DJ Splank never got round to telling anyone he didn't write the track. However, a remix of the single broke all over Europe, ensuring that legions of C64 fans with sharp ears ran to C64Audio.com to point out the theft. DJ Splank was quickly in touch and C64Audio.com was on the case, but original performer Whittaker settled with his publishers quickly. It wasn't the optimum outcome, but it did avoid the lawyers. An attempt to get DJ Spank to cover another tune, legally this time, met with a cool response that he didn't want to do it again. Artists will never learn that they shouldn't ditch their roots. Now, make up for us missing out on a million-dollar payday by going to http://www.c64audio.com, which will shortly offer digital albums and mobile content."

"THE C64 COMMUNITY WAS SURPRISED TO HEAR COMMODORE 64 MUSIC ON THE RADIO IN 2000 COURTESY OF ZOMBIE NATION" CHRIS ABBOT



» David Whittaker: A musical genius who was able to make the 8-bit systems sing

A BLUEPRINT FOR SUCCESS

Mathew Smith's *Manic Miner* was David Whittaker's self-confessed blue-print for his own multi-game epic. There are many parallels between the two releases and it's easy to see where Whittaker drew his inspiration, with the Sinclair title sporting a labyrinth of different gaming rooms, a character diverted from his day job and controlled by the user on his quest and a seemingly never-ending gaming structure. The pioneering use of in-game music, however, was the standout feature of both pieces. *Manic Miner* accomplished this for the first time on the ZX Spectrum and *Lazy Jones* revolutionized the way a soundtrack could be implemented in a videogame. Also of note was the inclusion of many plagiarised pieces on both fronts, with Whittaker's game containing popular chart hits of the day and *Manic Miner* exhibiting more refined and intellectual cuts from the likes of Strauss' The Blue Danube to In The Hall Of The Mountain King from Edvard Grieg.



» Time for some liquid refreshment

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: ED LOGG

DATE OF BIRTH: 11.9.1948

FIRST JOB: GRADING INSPECTOR

CURRENTLY: MY BUSINESS CARD SAYS: SUPER DUPER GAME GUY

FAVOURITE FILM: ANIMAL HOUSE

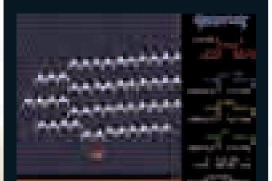


» The gorgeous *Gauntlet* cabinet. Gather round people…

YOU MUST PLAY…

Gauntlet

A tough call, as so many of Ed's creations are rightly considered classics, but we suggest you revisit *Gauntlet* via Xbox Live Arcade. Recreating that spirit of camaraderie as you battle through enemy hordes with friends online is a perfect example of how cutting-edge technology is making gameplay king once more. Just remember, don't shoot food…



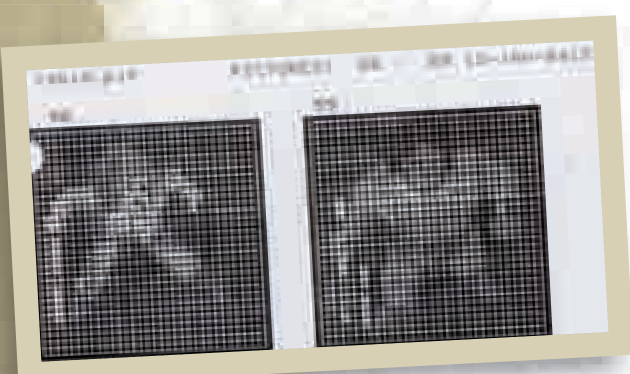
» It's times like this when you need your friends…

ED LOGG

HE WAS THE GOLDEN BOY OF THE GOLDEN AGE, PRODUCING SUCH ARCADE CLASSICS AS ASTEROIDS, CENTIPEDE AND GAUNTLET. PAUL DRURY PLAYS CO-OP MODE WITH ED LOGG AS HE APPROACHES HIS THIRTIETH YEAR IN THE VIDEOGAMES BUSINESS.

His games are the stuff of dreams. Literally, sometimes. Innumerable gamers have drifted into slumber with showers of asteroids floating across the black screen of their closed eyelids. It's a phenomenon that creator Ed Logg knows all about.

"Yeah, back then I'd be playing it in my sleep, shooting asteroids all night long" he recalls. "I'd go to bed thinking about a problem in the game and dream about it. Sometimes I'd wake up with the answer. Other times I'd have some really stupid ideas…"



» An image from the original *Gauntlet* proposal in January 1984

Of course, the skill is recognising the difference between the two and judging by his superlative back catalogue amassed over three decades, Ed made some shrewd decisions. The first and most crucial being that despite two years of Graduate school at Stanford studying Mathematics, a career in teaching was not for him.

"I just liked programming more, so I left and joined Control Data Corp. They did the CD 6000 Cyber series – the best computers around at the time, man."

Officially, he was to work on the Union Bank of Switzerland project. Unofficially, a games enthusiast had found a canvas. Ed had already tinkered with solving chess problems and simulating slot machines on 1400 series computers in the mid-Sixties and had played arguably the first coin-op ever – a pair of PDPs hooked up in the Stanford Student Coffee forum playing *Space War* – at the start of the Seventies.

Now, his interest and talent saw him sneakily converting the FORTRAN code of the original *Adventure* and *Star Trek* to run on IBM machines and distributing his creations over Arpanet, the precursor to today's wonderful web.

"I guess that was technically illegal, as they were government computers and you weren't supposed to do recreational stuff," Ed admits, sheepishly. "Was I subversive? Oh no, I was doing it for the love of the games, man…"

Spreading the love was soon to become a full-time occupation. A former co-worker who had moved to Atari urged Ed to follow suit, enthusing about how the company actually paid you to write games. Ed impressed at interview by describing how he'd built his own computer and produced a version of *Sea Wolf* on it and thus in 1978 he became part of the coin-op division. Ed took over a project begun by Dennis Koble,





» **Left:** The Golden Boy and a gilded *Asteroids*. How apt.
Above: *Atari Football*, before Ed added another pair of balls.

who had just moved into the fledgling consumer division, entitled *Dirt Bike*. He completed this reworking of driving game *Sprint*, the steering wheel now replaced by sturdy handlebars, but the title never made it into full production. However, resourceful Ed was pioneering the concept of multi-tasking long before the term had become common industry parlance.

"Back then, you wrote stuff down on a computer printout and gave it to some gals and they entered in the code. It was in Assembly language and credit to gals like Linda and Cindy, who would point out if you'd done an LD statement when it should have been LDA. Linda in particular was notorious for adding snotty little comments on your code. Real cute. Anyway, they only had one PDP machine back then and it took about an hour to compile before you'd get some paper tape back. In that time, I could work on something else. I'd been talking with Owen Rubin over lunch about some ideas we had to extend *Breakout* and so I could daisy chain *Super Breakout* with *Dirt Bike*, doing an hour on each…"

Ed came up with six new flavours for the popular *Breakout*, the most compelling being 'Progressive' mode, which introduced an *Invaders*-style onslaught as the walls of bricks descended towards your humble bat. Other ideas, such as coloured bricks that required multiple strikes to destroy, would have to wait until technology caught up.

"You know *Arkanoid*?" enthuses Ed. "I can see a lot of our ideas in that. But we didn't even have colour! It was just an overlay on the screen."

Ah, the joy of overlays. The creative use of sticky plastic to hide the graphical limitations of the day helped augment, *Video Pinball*, Ed's next project. Having spent much time coding physics to replicate a ball bouncing against the different surfaces of a pintable and even including a 'nudge' feature on the control panel to simulate the physical thump wizards would administer in tight spots, the whole thing was to be projected over a backdrop of hipsters strutting their stuff in the city. An ingenious idea, indeed.

"I thought it was a stupid idea," grumbles Ed, swiftly assuring me he isn't the flared-trouser wearing disco dancer 'getting down' on screen. "But it did better than I thought. For once, my first impression was wrong…"

Ed undeniably had an eye for what might work and what is beyond resuscitation. It was a talent that led to his greatest success.

"BACK THEN I'D BE PLAYING MY GAMES IN MY SLEEP, SHOOTING ASTEROIDS ALL NIGHT LONG" ED LOGG

"I talked to Lyle Rains about an idea he'd got based on a game called *Cosmos*. I remember playing that a year before in John Ray's area and I'd thought it was daft – you were just flying around this big asteroid in the middle and it didn't do anything. But I'd noticed people kept shooting at it and Lyle suggested if they could blow that planet thing up, that might be fun…"

The rocks were rolling. Drawing ideas from his old love of *Space War* and realising that the recently developed vector technology he'd worked on for *Lunar Lander* provided the high definition required for the numerous firing angles, the *Asteroids* project thrust forward. Using new technology had drawbacks, nonetheless, as Ed explains.

"If the game crashed, the beam would go to the middle of the screen and if you left it on, it would burn a hole in the phosphor. Oh yeah, that happened! So we put a 'spot killer' on the board, so if there wasn't enough deflection on the XY raster it would shut down. Remember the copyright message at the bottom of the screen? That was added to give it enough deflection to keep the spot killer off. But no one told me what the minimum deflection time was! I found out later that I should have given it more. On some machines, if you got down to like one asteroid and one ship, the screen would start to fade out. That was the spot killer circuitry coming in…"

It was a situation that happened more than Ed had anticipated. He had added enemy spaceships to keep players on their toes and had briefly considered whether it might be possible to leave a single rock floating gently across the screen and concentrate solely on destroying the high point value UFOs. He concluded that the strategy which became known as 'lurking' was impossible – and it would have been, but for a very late change to his code…

"Originally, the nasty little UFO would fire every second, but if you shot it at say ¾ of a second into the cycle, the next one would fire ¼ second after it came on screen. That meant a lot of time where it would nail you straight away and someone said it wasn't fair. I agreed and so the timer resets each time. What I should have done is as your score increased, that timer would decrease to nothing at say 60K. That would have killed lurking. But you know in retrospect that might have hurt *Asteroids* long-term sales."

Such a little decision, yet such a crucial one. Expert *Asteroids* players could dominate the machine for days (see RG 28's High Score column for how long) and thus it played host to the marathon gaming heroics that epitomised those early arcade days, securing its place as Atari's most successful coin-op. It was a triumph not to be repeated by the sequel, the brutally difficult *Asteroids Deluxe*, but then Ed had no involvement in the project. Didn't it feel strange to hand over your baby to someone else?

"It wasn't my baby!" Ed exclaims. "That became obvious when they started doing consumer versions and never consulted me. I played 'em and thought they sucked – they just didn't obey any of the rules."

The blasé attitude of management and the growing tension between the coin-op and consumer divisions at Atari not withstanding (see boxout), the company did at least recognise Ed's contribution to their

BOOK OF DREAMS

Atari's famous brainstorming sessions were conducted over several days in Californian locations such as Boulder Creek and Napa. Ed describes the creative process: "We'd submit ideas beforehand, discuss them in groups and then propose the best ideas. There'd be this book produced every year with all of these ideas in…" Sadly, Ed hasn't kept hold of any of these imaginative tomes. Does this mean hundreds of winning game designs have been lost? "Actually, there were very few ideas that were any good," Ed advises me. "Design by committee never really works. You end up going in all directions. I don't want to sound smug, but there are very few people in the industry capable of coming up with a good idea, something with a real hook to it, and then have the wherewithall to bring together all the pieces." We agree – but if anyone out there does still have a copy of one of these Atari game concept compilations, Retro Gamer would love to see it…



» Dr Muto. Remind you of anyone?



» *San Francisco Rush 2049* for Dreamcast – one of numerous home conversions Ed worked on

success and promoted him to supervisor. It was a role he detested. "I didn't like the hiring and firing and all the people issues. The bottom line was, I wasn't doing games, so I quit after a year and a half."

What Ed took away from his time supervising the conversion of Atari's Football coin-op to support four players, aside from the realisation management wasn't for him, was key to his next project. He saw the potential of the trackball controller and of, Donna Bailey, a new employee he'd recruited. He brought them together for *Bug Hunter*, a game idea that had come out of one of Atari's off-site brainstorming sessions (see boxout Book Of Dreams).

It turned out to be an excellent match. With Ed handling much of the initial design and Donna bringing some fresh coding fingers to her first project, the resulting *Centipede* almost surpassed *Asteroids* in terms of sales and critical acclaim. It proved especially popular amongst female players, drawing many women into arcades for the first time. Was this perhaps due to Donna's feminine touch and those beguiling pastel shades that burst from the playfield?

"Maybe," muses Ed. "But then you've got to realise the choice of colours we had back then wasn't particularly large! And it was supposed to be psychedelic… No, I promise those mushrooms aren't hallucinogenic."

This time, Ed elected to produce the sequel himself and, in 1982, *Millipede* graced the arcades with more frenetic insect action. "I wanted to fix some things I hadn't done in the first one – some nuances to give the expert players a new thrill. They could start at a higher level and there could be up to eight spiders out there at once. Plus it got them off the machine quicker…" It was another huge hit and Atari's coin-op division seemed invincible. Ed did dip his toe briefly into developing for the VCS when he produced *Othello* in 1979 after he asked Carol Shaw, who'd programmed *Checkers*, if he could see her kernel. Ed assures us this is not a euphemism – he gratefully used her code as the basis for the board game. Yet his heart remained in the arcades, which proved fortuitous when the Tramiels bought out Atari and wielded a bloody axe to the consumer division, yet left Atari Coin-op largely unscathed.

"Hell, the Tramiels could have killed us there and then, but Time Warner owed money to Namco and ended up offering our division to them. They said sure."

So Ed and the team continued their groundbreaking work under Japanese direction. He embraced new technology with his laser disc game *Road Runner*, but when field tests failed to prove its appeal, marketing bombarded him with suggestions of how to make it better.

"It's one of Ed Logg's Laws," he states in learned tones. "What you get from the first test is pretty much

"CENTIPEDE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE PSYCHEDELIC… NO, I PROMISE THOSE MUSHROOMS AREN'T HALLUCINOGENIC, MAN" ED LOGG

RUNNING THE GAUNTLET

A testament to how ground breaking Ed's four-player opus *Gauntlet* was, the game had five patents taken out to protect the innovations it introduced.

'Four of those had my name on them,' says Ed. 'The company owned everything and they're supposed to pay you a reasonable fee for the rights, but they made you sign it all over for $1. I actually had the nerve to ask the lawyer for my dollar. He pulled one out of his pocket and threw it in my face and said, 'This is the last one you're ever getting!' I framed it, with that quote.'

So, if the essence of success in *Gauntlet* is putting together the perfect squad, we ask Ed which fellow industry folk he'd like to join him on the ultimate four-player coding team.

'I'd grab Eugene Jarvis, as he still has lots of great ideas; Bob Flanagan, who worked with me on so many different games and got so much done… and on time; and I'd have Dave Sheppard to do all the tools necessary to implement it all.'

A team of wizards, indeed.



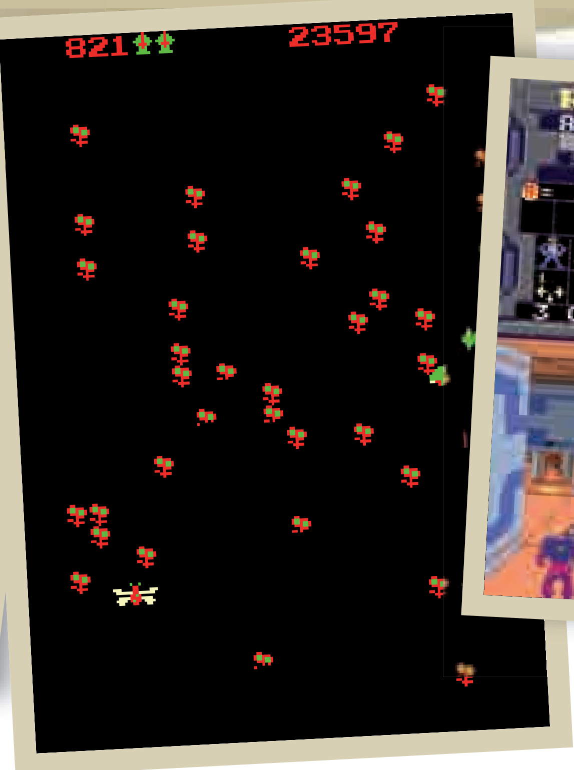
» *Gauntlet 2* featured a six-digit code and a secret room… did you win one of the 500 T-shirts?



» The arse-quaking *Steel Talons* cabinet



» *Gauntlet* was a superb coin-op that pushed co-operation to the limit - at least until you decided to grab all the gold and food…





» **Left:** Logg teamed up with Donna Bailey to create the excellent *Centipede* **Above:** *Xybots* began as *Gauntlet 3* before heading down a *Major Havoc*-style corridor…



» *Millipede*, Ed's sequel was a massive improvement on the original game

what you're gonna get. If something sucks, no slight change is going make a difference. They wanted me to convert it to a different board, but I told them to get someone else. And anyway, I had this other idea I really wanted to work on…"

Gauntlet proved to be a mighty good idea. Having discussed with engineer Pat McCarthy the need to be able to change motion objects on the fly, the resulting four-layer board, double the size of anything Atari had done previously, allowed a behemoth of a game. Drawing inspiration from *Dungeons & Dragons* and a little known computer game called *Dandy*, Ed and his team created the definitive multi-player arcade adventure. Technologically impressive (see boxout Running The Gauntlet), it brought players together in an epic quest, but Ed wasn't above sowing a little dissension in the ranks.

"We got a professional in to do the speech, like a dungeon master telling you when you'd screwed up. I kind of liked when it would say, Wizard is eating most of the food, to poke the other players into thinking 'hey, are we gonna let him get away with that!' It was co-operative up to the point when you needed or wanted something."

Gauntlet 2 followed in 1986, expanding the game and allowing players to choose the same character as their comrades. Ed was already working on a third instalment, *Catacombs*, which would take the quest into the third dimension, when management decreed they'd had enough of *Gauntlet* and Ed was forced to change the theme dramatically. Released in 1987, *Xybots* was certainly ambitious, mimicking *Doom*'s corridor based combat with ingenious use of stamp hardware, but the innovative controls proved hard for players to adapt.

"Maybe we couldn't educate players to the new controls and a first-person perspective can be a problem," concedes Ed. "I wish I'd stuck to my guns and kept it as *Catacombs*."

He wasn't to be discouraged from developing in 3D, mind. Helicopter flight sim *Steel Talons* saw him team up with old buddy Ed '*Battlezone*' Rotberg, a talented but sometimes fiery fellow. "Ed's got a real hot temper, which kind of makes me uneasy. It never came to blows, but there was a little yelling and screaming."

Ed assures us this had nothing to do with him being married to a former girlfriend of Mr Rotberg ("split up long before and he even introduced me to her at a party!") and besides, the screaming was not confined to those developing the game. "I wanted players to feel they'd been shot, so we put a pinball thumper under the seat. I didn't realise the engineer had put more current through it than planned and man, it was like someone was hitting the seat with a hammer."

And so Ed left the arcade industry with a bang. The Nineties saw him move into the consumer division, converting the *San Francisco Rush* driving series for N64 and later for the Dreamcast. It was something Ed wasn't unaccustomed to. Since the mid-Eighties, he'd been producing NES games, including conversions of *Centipede*, *Millipede* and a superlative version of *Tetris* which he'd written from scratch. The game had ended up having to be withdrawn amidst legal wranglings with Nintendo. "Some of the guys at Tengen had reversed engineered the lockout chip on the NES. I was nothing to do with it… but I knew the games Nintendo were playing and didn't like it either." The new millennium saw Ed head up the programmers that produced *Dr Muto* for PlayStation 2 in 2002, which starred an ageing mad scientist conducting bizarre experiments. Any relation, Ed?

"No," he responds adamantly, before adding after a lengthy pause, "Okay, perhaps there's a bit of me in him. Maybe he's who I'd like to be. But by then, making a game took so long and you needed a huge team. It just wasn't as exciting to me anymore…"

And so when Midway Games shut the doors on his studio in 2003, Ed returned to what he knew best. He set up a small start-up development company to produce mobile phone games. Three were released by GenPlay, before he left to create similar games for cable TV and will soon be releasing new titles through TvHead.

So, as his illustrious career draws to a close, we have to wonder – will he finally have time to enjoy his accumulated riches or did the Golden Boy, like so many before him, blow it all on wine, women and song?

"You got part of that right… my ex-wife got half the money. No, I was never into wine and song. I'm retiring shortly, so hopefully I can use what's left, but not on fast cars and loose women. Oh man, now my wife's laughing at me…"

Well, if he can enjoy it half as much as we've enjoyed his wondrous creations, I'm sure he'll be the one that's laughing...

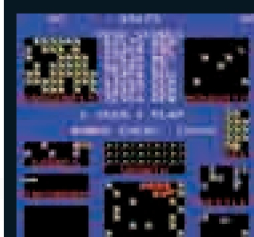
"I LIKED IT WHEN GAUNTLET WOULD SAY, WIZARD IS EATING MOST OF THE FOOD, TO POKE THE OTHER PLAYERS INTO THINKING 'HEY, ARE WE GONNA LET HIM GET AWAY WITH THAT!'" ED LOGG

HIGH SCORE

Asteroids is often credited with introducing the High Score Table to videogames, but Ed modestly points out he actually took the idea from the old *Exidy* title, *Star Fire*.

"I thought, yeah, I can do that. We didn't have battery backup, but I could keep ten scores stored while the machine was powered up. By *Centipede*, we'd got battery backup to keep scores in memory – it was like a programmable Eprom, like you get with cameras nowadays."

Ed is equally modest when we remind him that his name sits aloft the default high score table in the painfully difficult 'real flight mode' of *Steel Talons*. "We'd put a lot of help into the game, like stabilising your helicopter to keep it flying level, and we thought it would be good to have an option to turn all that off. You could do better in that mode if you could handle it. No, I wasn't an expert, I just put myself at the top of the high scores. Just a little vanity, okay!"



» Ooh look, this lad's done well…

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?

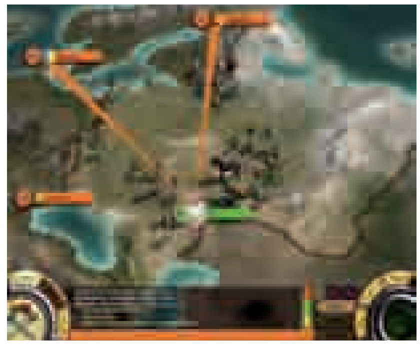
ED LOGG DESERT ISLAND DISKS





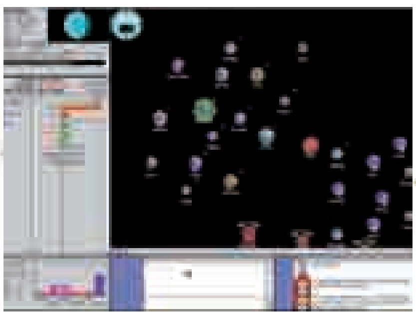
ROBOTRON ARCADE

1 It's the most chosen Desert Island Disk? No kidding. For good reason, too. It's a real adrenaline rush. I always crank it up to difficulty 10 and just play it on that.



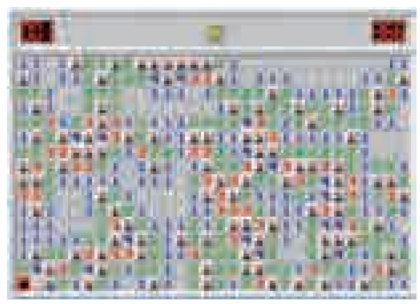
RISK 2 PC

2 The real time strategy game is a fabulous idea. I'd love to play this online with lots of people.



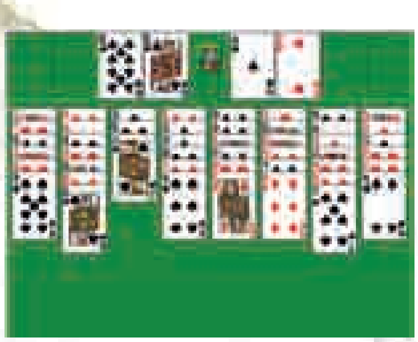
SPACEWARD HO! MAC

3 I originally played it on the Mac. It's basically a 'conquer the universe' resource management game, but most of that genre these days are all about managing tons of resources, which drives me nuts. This has basically three – money, technology and savings – and I think it's a great game.



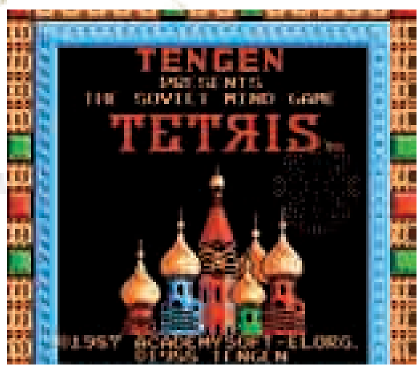
MINE SWEEPER PC

4 Do I play it to fill in five minutes between jobs? You mean an hour?! I'm still constantly trying to beat 1 minute 40 seconds on the expert level. I did it once – 1.39 is my best!



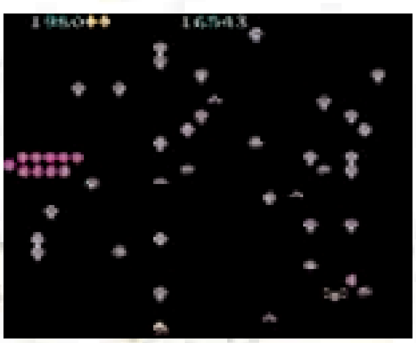
FREE CELL PC

5 The appeal is that it really teaches you patience. I can usually win all the games but I get lazy. I paint myself into a corner and just go, 'shit'. I've got up to 455 consecutive wins but I'm still always screwing up. You need to look ahead – it's all visual, man.



TETRIS NES

6 Yeah, I'll take my version. I think it's the best and hey, that's not just my opinion. I'm now with a company who were trying to get a license for *Tetris* and the guys who owned it said the best version of the game was the one I did. One of our guys said, "Well, we've got him working for us now…" I think it might have helped.



CENTIPEDE ARCADE

7 I go back to it and say, 'Gee, it's still got it.' I can see why people got addicted to *Centipede*. You kind of know when you've done that when you leave work and people are still playing your game… and they're still there when you arrive the following morning.



ASTEROIDS ARCADE

8 I think it gave you plenty of choices of how to play – you can lurk, fly around, run away, stay in one place. My first wife loved the game and had her own machine before we met. So naturally, she loved the creator…

eMag

GARGOYLE'S QUEST

A CLASSIC BIRTHS A CLASSIC



- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM/RPG
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** GAME BOY (B/W)
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2

HISTORY

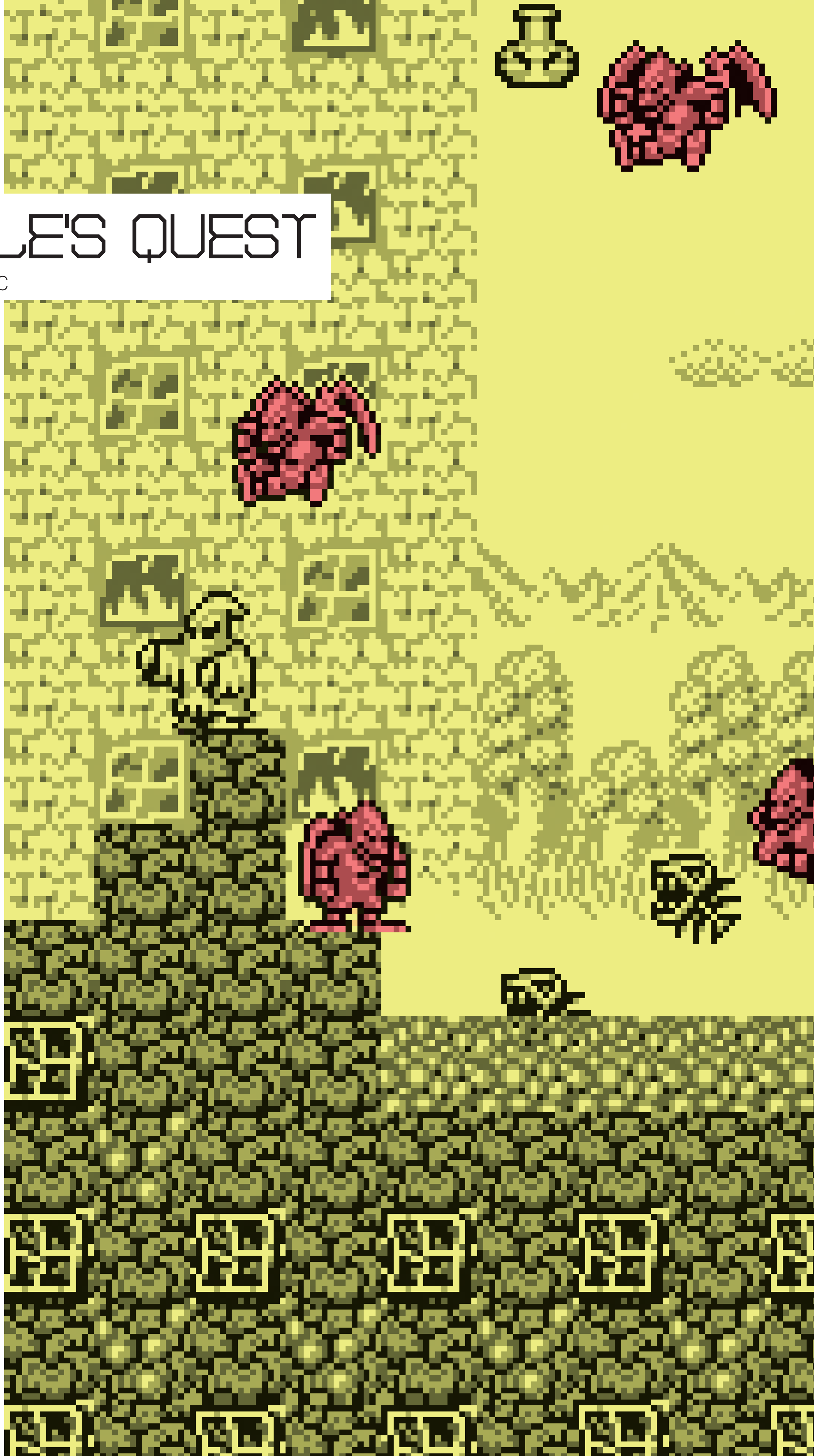


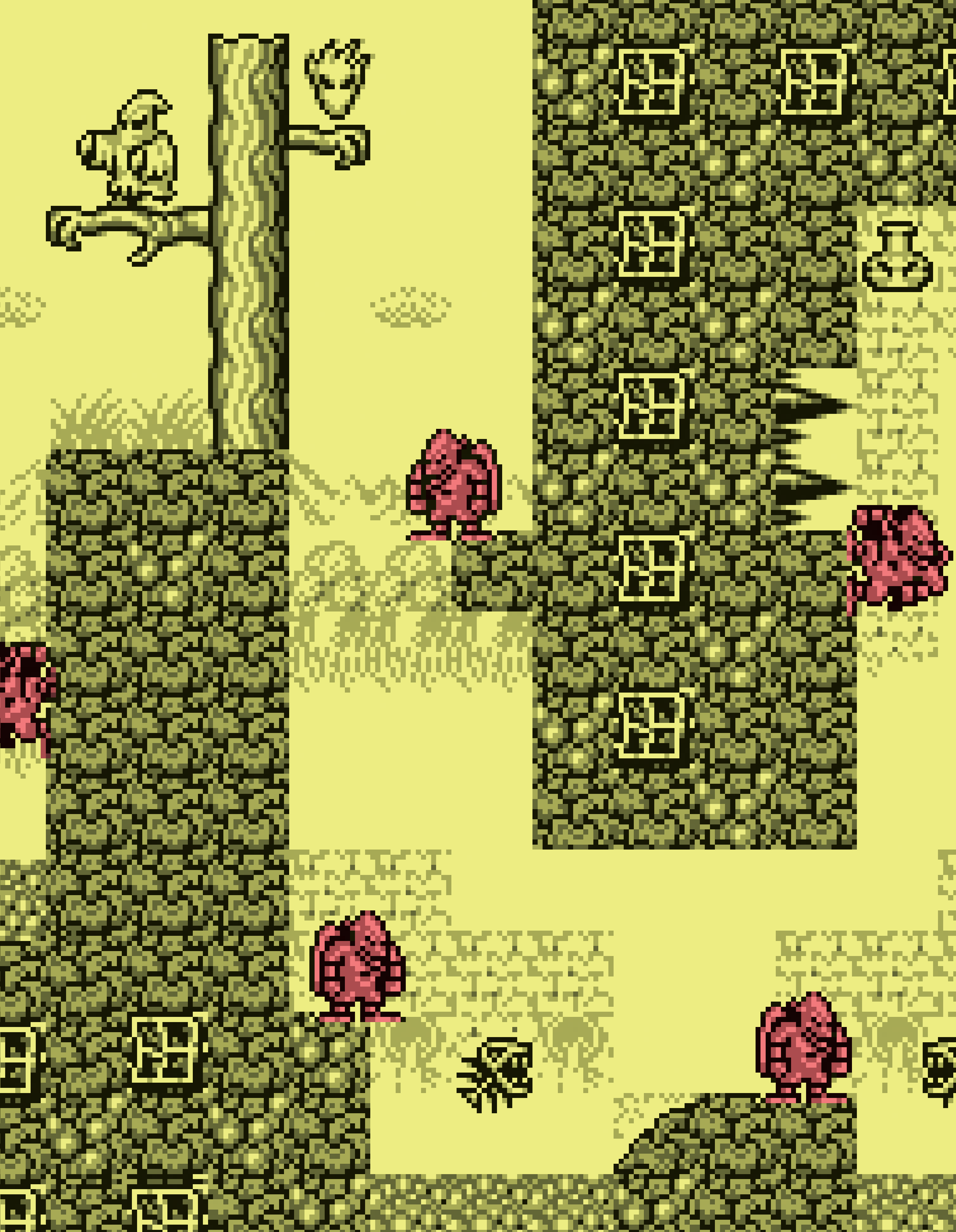
It's rare for spin-off titles to come close to the quality of the source material, let alone actually eclipse them and exemplify what can be done with specific hardware, but *Gargoyle's Quest* is just such a game.

It features Firebrand (a Red Arrimer) whose debut was in the arcade version of Capcom's *Ghosts 'N Goblins* (not *Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, despite the strong connections, hence why we're stating that *Gargoyle's Quest* surpasses its source material). Despite him being one of the most annoying enemies in the original game, Capcom saw fit to develop a separate stand-alone title for the monochrome Game Boy (and later NES and SNES sequels with greatly improved visuals). Strangely despite this being one of Capcom's finest moments on the colour-challenged handheld, not many people are aware of it or how excellent it is.

What made it work so well was the blending of genres (platforming action with a dash of RPG), along with a design ethos that took advantage of and understood the Game Boy's limitations. The cramped screen space was used effectively in conjunction with very precise level design and well defined monochrome graphics – other handheld games feature overly large characters which can make play frustrating. It was designed specifically for and so perfectly suited the Game Boy, showing that severe limitations can be greatly beneficial.

The use of mild and non-intrusive RPG elements also worked well, with moments of overhead exploration and dialogue interspersed with side-scrolling action stages and bosses – there were also occasional random battles, taking the form of short bite-sized action set-pieces which thankfully never became worn-out. The plot meanwhile was perfect fan service: as Firebrand, your quest was to interact with allies who resembled bosses from the parent series, and ultimately save the Ghoul Realm. By being set in the original *G'NG* world while also examining the lives and history of the monsters fought previously, it was a fantastic twist on a familiar and established brand.





» THIS MONTH WE LOOK AT INDIE FREEWARE

RETRORATED



This month we're looking at indie freeware games which have a retro twist. They won't cost a penny, and they're the perfect titles to dip into if you want a new game which plays like an old one. Who says they don't make 'em like they used to?

NOITU LOVE AND THE ARMY OF GRINNING DARNS

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** JOAKIM SANDBERG

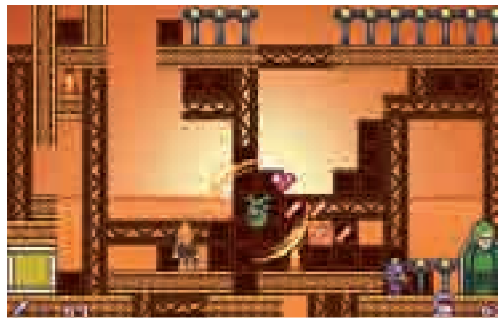
» **URL:** HTTP://WWW.KONJAK.ORG/

Featuring possibly the greatest (and almost certainly the longest) title ever, plus a rocking soundtrack and a great NES aesthetic, *Noitu Love* is a fantastic homage to countless 8-bit brawlers of the past.

The story is pure (but wonderful) lunacy and involves a scientist turning the city's people into monkeys using his army of, yes you guessed it, Grinning Darns. It's your job to kick their asses whilst traversing the colourful locales, utilising a series of evolution machines to solve the various puzzles.

Despite the standard character being limited to three main attack moves, the rest of *Noitu Love* haemorrhages a tremendous amount of variety: 26 music tracks, massive bosses, six incredibly colourful and diverse levels, unlockables, and so on and so on. It's just a pity the fighting mechanics can get repetitive.

OVERALL 83%



» The spin kick becomes the move of choice. A better fighting system and *Noitu* would be perfect.

GUARDIAN OF PARADISE

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** BUSTER

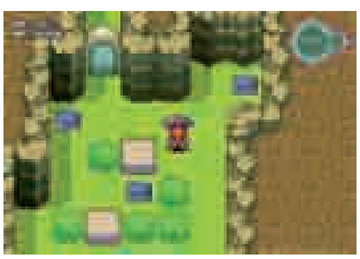
» **URL:** HTTP://AGTP.ROMHACK.NET/RAKUGA.HTM

Miyamoto has a lot to answer for: by creating masterpieces people will try to emulate him. The Japanese-developed *Guardian Of Paradise* is an example where this works perfectly, and is one of the best *Link To The Past* style games we've played.

It's very professional and slick. The music is wonderful; the visuals bright and detailed; the level design precise and refined. Unlike some other indie games the controls are smooth and the pacing perfectly balanced, as you set about acquiring the five elementals needed to reach "Paradise" and save your sister. The ability to save anywhere also makes it perfect for brief plays.

There is little to fault; the kind of game that were it on the GBA you'd happily pay money for. But it's free, meaning there's no reason not to play it right now.

OVERALL 94%



» The first big block-pushing puzzle you come across. They're all very cleverly designed.



» Bosses are large, colourful, and quite ingenious; there are many great moments.



retro GAMER SIZZLER

DASH BORDER

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** ISSHIKI

» **URL:** HTTP://HOMEPAGE2.NIFTY.COM/ISSHIKI/

Taking the old and adding a dash of the new sometimes yields great results. *Dash Border* takes the *Asteroids* concept of a single warp-around level filled with objects that need destroying, and then limits their movement while allowing them to shoot back. It also features a techno soundtrack, neon line-graphics, and encourages fast movements to increase firepower. It has the feeling of one of Kenta Cho's games.

While it has the making of a great zone-out shoot-'em-up, the levels end too quickly and the effect is jarring. There's not enough variety, which makes it feel lacking. It's free, but you're better off saving your time and playing a game actually made by Kenta Cho.

OVERALL 57%



» We want another Kenta Cho game, dammit! Nothing else satisfies in quite the same way.

MISYO

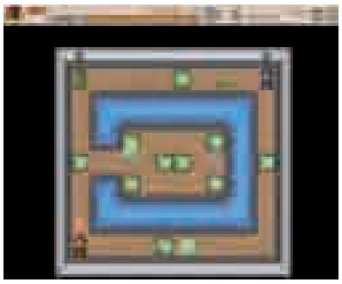
INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** GAME RESEARCH CREATORS

» **URL:** HTTP://GRC.X0.COM/MISYO.HTM

***Lost Vikings* was an excellent game that featured the sorely underused concept of a trio of characters, each with special abilities that need to be used in tandem to solve puzzles.** So when *Misyo* was touted as having similar qualities, expectations were high.

You control three ninjas: Red (runs fast), Green (turns invisible), and Blue (hovers). Using their abilities drains a constantly recharging power bar, and some obstacles (such as enemies, potholes and rivers) will require dextrous use of their skills to pass – collecting scrolls and reaching the exit.



» The design may be flawed, but the music is some of the best we've heard in an indie game.

Great in theory but most levels can be completed using only one character – making the ability to switch between them redundant. Undeniably fun in short bursts, but there's not enough clever level design.

OVERALL 70%

LYLE IN CUBE SECTOR

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** NIC DESTEFANO

» **URL:** HTTP://WWW.SITESLED.COM/MEMBERS/BOGO/LYLE.HTML

***Metroid*vania games are hugely in fashion, and thanks to the phenomenal *Cave Story* it's now de rigueur within the indie scene.** Unlike the many unfinished attempts that exist, *Lyle In Cube Sector* manages to adopt the *Metroid*vania ethos and actually be worthwhile.

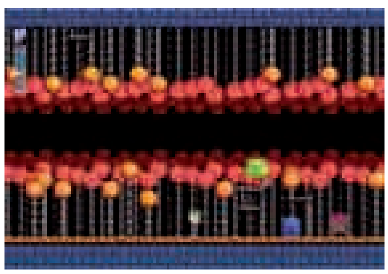
While the similarities to *Super Metroid* are unmistakable, *Lyle*'s bizarre and surreal world makes it a very unique experience. Special mention must also go to the music – not enough people are creating great SID-chip styled tunes like this anymore.

Rather than standard weapons *Lyle* has you throw cubes at enemies, while the power-ups are also rather unusual (one allows you to kick cubes). The whole thing works because it's not just a clone, it has a genuinely distinctive style of its own. Brilliant.

OVERALL 90%



» Pick up cubes and throw them to defeat troublesome enemies. Unusual, but it works.



» Stylistically the levels are unlike anything else, and are well complimented by the chip-tune music.

THE SHIVAH

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** DAVE GILBERT

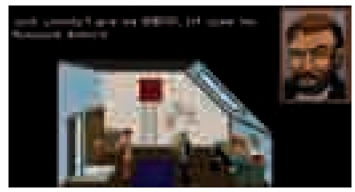
» **URL:** HTTP://WWW.DAVELGIL.COM/

Courtesy of "Adventure Game Studio" utility, *The Shivah* puts you in the role of a Rabbi trying to solve the murder of an ex-congregation member. For some reason he's left you ten thousand dollars, and the police suspect you're the killer. Full points for originality; we can't think of many point-and-click adventures starring a Jewish priest.

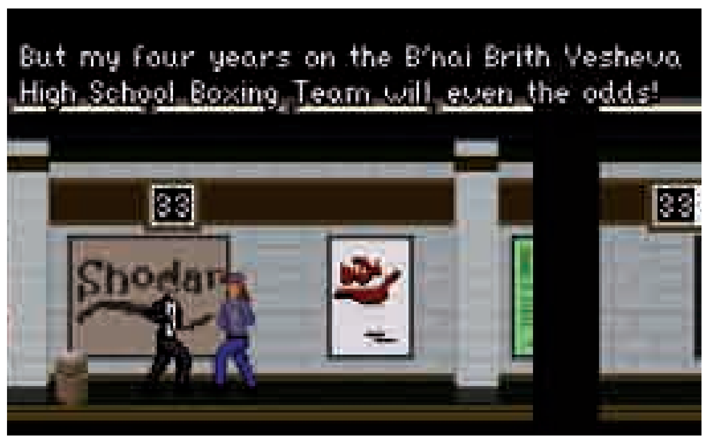
The graphics are simple, but nicely refined in a way not often seen, while the excellent music conveys much atmosphere. Interestingly there are no item-based puzzles – the game revolves around finding clues in conversation and then acting on them (hacking emails for example).

Letting it down is that despite a fantastically intriguing start, it loses a little focus near the end. The unusual premise might put some off, but it's an enjoyable freeware adventure worth checking out.

OVERALL 86%



» Simple graphics, but an engrossing mystery. Best of all, the full standard version is free!



» Dave Gilbert is working on a deluxe version with voice acting, retailing for $5.

WITHIN A DEEP FOREST

INFORMATION

» **DEVELOPER:** NICKLAS NYGREN

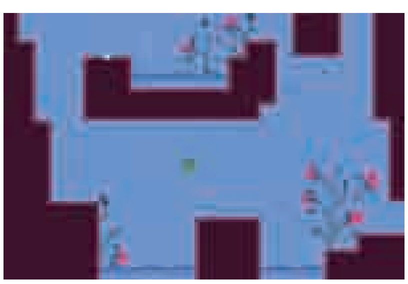
» **URL:** HTTP://WITHINADEEPFOREST.NI2.SE

Remember those games on the Speccy and C64 that involved something that bounced? (*Cauldron 2* pops into our collective hive mind). Good, because *Within A Deep Forest* is rather similar to those games.

Ignore the schlock plot, this is all about bouncing puzzles for you to get your balls through. Yes, plural, because progress through the ethereal landscape yields further balls, with each having distinct abilities; one allows higher bouncing, another makes you heavier. The fun comes from acquiring different forms, working out their function and how they affect the surroundings.

Atmospheric, eerie, and sometimes very challenging, this freeware title has had much effort put into it.

OVERALL 89%





» A foreboding forest bathed in moonlight. The atmosphere in this made us shiver.

» CAPCOM BRINGS BACK SIR ARTHUR WITH STYLE

ULTIMATE GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS

I AIN'T AFRAID OF NO GOBLINS



- » **SYSTEM:** PS2
- » **PRICE:** £34.99
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1

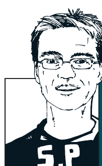


I must admit that I had some concerns after Capcom's announcement of *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* on PSP.

Make that many concerns. First I was never a massive fan of the original *Ghosts 'N Goblins* game (*Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* being the preferred iteration), so this similarly named update conjured up tortured images of the fairly unexciting arcade version and stupidly hard NES port. Second was that Capcom had chosen to go down the 3D polygon route, and initial show reports were not promising. Next was that generally when a company reworks a classic, they turn out a bit rubbish. After *Final Fight: Streetwise* we were concerned that Arthur's new adventure would be equally dull. What calamities might afflict this latest attempt to bring an old game into the modern age? Thankfully, and with much rapturous waving of arms, it has to be said nothing. Our fears were unfounded and we really should have had more faith in Capcom's abilities (specifically the original *Ghost 'N Goblins* team who made this), because *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* is a tremendous return to form and is a very good PSP title.

Despite the jump to 3D visuals (gameplay is still 2D side-scrolling), veterans of the 16-bit iterations will instantly be in the throes of nostalgia (because yes, it's still obscenely difficult). Both the character models and backgrounds contain plenty of ornate detail despite being rendered in polygons, and are equally well animated. Other developers must take note, since this is how updating a 2D masterpiece should be done. Granted the screen is a little darker than some might like, but it doesn't greatly detract from the quality displayed. There are countless small details that will seem familiar and help to maintain consistency with past games; don't worry, Firebrand the Red Arrimer again makes an appearance and is still the tough bastard he always was.

Everything about *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* has



OPINION

This is quite possibly one of the most gorgeous games to ever grace the PSP. Oh, and it's also one of the toughest. While its insane difficulty is going to put a great many gamers off, you really should persevere, as it's easily one of the greatest platformers to appear on any system, let alone the PSP. Let's just hope Konami is now inspired to release a 2D *Castlevania* for Sony's handheld.

Simon Phillips



» This is the eyeball tree. Retro Gamer once owned a pet eyeball, but after repeated and intrusive poking it eventually ran away.



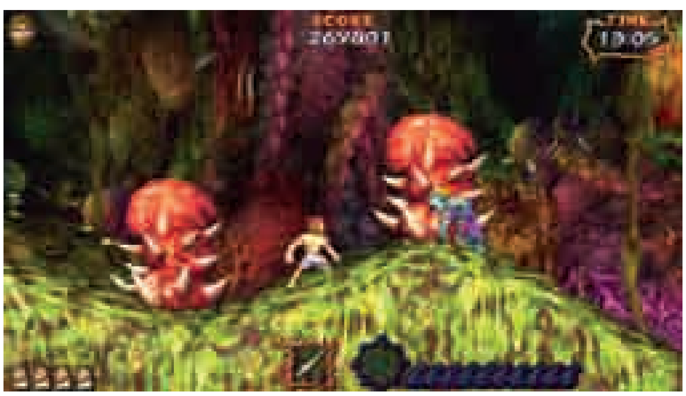
» From the stats menu you can view armour and weapons, equip shields and magic, examine items, or warp to a different level.



» Levels remain highly diverse. Here Sir Arthur is riding a raft over a sea of sludge.

» The sign of a real man and all true knights is, clearly, the growing of a beard.





» Wearing only boxers while stuck between a spiky thing and a really spiky thing. Will Sir Arthur ever prevail?



» This wave of blood in Level 2 will be the undoing of many inexperienced players.



OPINION

Take note developers, if you've got any plans to update a classic franchise, then Capcom has provided you with the perfect blueprint. *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* is quite possibly the finest remake I've ever seen and carefully introduces the series to a new generation of gamers whilst keeping the original fans perfectly happy. Yes it's damn tough, but what did you expect? It's a *Ghost 'N Goblins* game. Capcom's impressive roll continues.

Darran Jones

undergone a natural and traceable evolution, especially the gameplay, but not to the point where it loses the original style and atmosphere. Added to the traditional formula is the ability to dash and grab onto far off ledges, though annoyingly there still isn't any actual airborne control which is bound to frustrate a few players. The available weapons have also been tweaked since last time (nothing too drastic), and you can cast magic spells so long as some (any) armour is held and you have sufficient MP. Different magic is collected and can then be equipped at leisure, as can defensive shields. There's also a selection of new armour.

After the first boss there's even a dramatic shift hinting at the title taking a "*Metroid*vania" style direction, when you acquire some boots, which permanently gift you with double-jumping. Another later ability is flight, and when each stage is completed you're able to move on or choose a previous one to redo and discover extra goodies using these techniques. Such gradual accomplishments are very satisfying, and add much replay value.

With this new repertoire of increasing abilities, character control feels more tangible and in no time you'll be double-jumping over enemies, casting magic mid-leap, before finishing off with a flurry of vertical daggers. Even with Arthur's steady empowerment and ability to better accomplish certain tasks, *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins* always remains the same wonderfully intense and frenetic platformer, which never lets you relax even for a second. It may have evolved, but it hasn't left its roots.

One of the biggest (and most beneficial) additions is automatic respawning when you die, and infinite continues. But these are not something that should irk stalwart fans since, make no mistake, this is still a damn challenging title and it will take much practice to complete. These features allow you to enjoy the game's many new additions more fully, while allowing you to take in the finely crafted locales.

We won't wear you out listing any of the other additions (super special magic rings, ability to save, etc); all you need to know is that now strategy is required along with reflexes, and that there is plenty to keep coming back for – making this a fantastic series update.

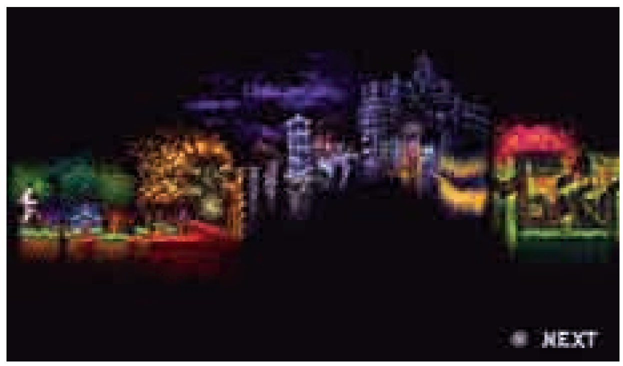
IN SUMMARY

Incredibly tough but true to its origins – this is exactly how classics should be brought back. Full of panache, we couldn't have hoped for better.

RATING **91%**



» Secrets are littered throughout the levels. Staffs to warp around the map, special rings that need collecting, powerful items, etc.

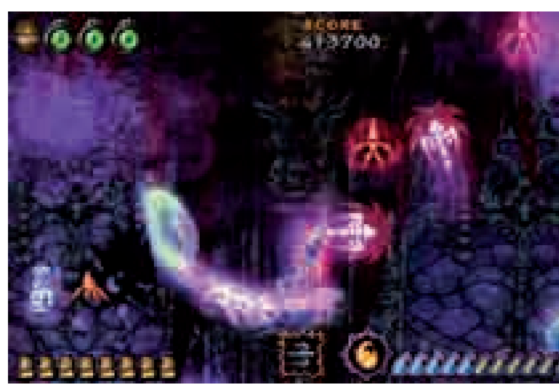


» Ahh yes, the classic scrolling *GnG* map. We remember it vividly. Don't expect to reach the end too soon.



» Snakes alive! This vicious looking repitle may look dangerous, but he's surprisingly easy to kill





» UNSOPHISTICATED BUT INCREDIBLY FUN ROUGH AND TUMBLE BRAWLER

SEGA AGES VOL 26: DYNAMITE DEKA

EXPLOSIVE – LIKE ITS NAME



- » **SYSTEM:** PS2
- » **PRICE:** 3392 YEN (ABOUT £16)
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLAYERS:** 1 – 2



Some games are worth buying because they're refined and elegant. Other games are like those cheap, over-salted and some would say "dodgy" hotdogs you buy from New York street vendors, which are covered in cheese, fried onions and hot chili sauce. From deep within your mind you can hear screams that it's junk food, and yet you can't help but love it anyway. *Dynamite Deka* (*Die Hard Arcade* in the West) on PS2 falls into this latter category.

It's not a hugely sophisticated game, being a simple 3D brawler ported from the Arcade/Saturn, but that doesn't stop it being some of the most rousing good fun we've had in the office for (Sega) Ages, and that goes for both the one and two-player modes. Only three buttons are used but there is a surprising array of moves to perform, not to mention the weapons. Oh yes, the weapons. Beating people with brooms, air-horns, and anything else close to hand ensures the action always remains frenetic.



» Two scantily clad woman fighting each other in a glowing fountain. It's just like Saturday nights in Bournemouth!



» Fist versus Groin in the ultimate grudge-match battle for supremacy. Our money is on the Fist.

Even after a brief play it's instantly apparent that a lot of effort (dare we say love?) went into beefing things up. There's an extensive list of bonuses and gratuitous Sega fan-service, and we love gratuitous fan-service. Along with the original Saturn games and also a graphically updated version, there's Easy Mode, which allows you to change into Axe Battler and Tyris Flare from *Golden Axe*. This contains other goodies, such as the original aquarium boss being replaced by Death Adder himself in a special themed area. Then there's One Shot Kills, Arrest, Deadline (time attack) and Altered Beast modes to unlock, all of which require different methods of playing.

Everything is so unashamedly and strikingly exaggerated, you can't help but laugh like a fool. Sega has even recreated and included its original *Periscope* arcade machine, which unlocks additional credits when played.

There's also a gallery mode and an original advert trailer. It all makes for a well-rounded port at an affordable price – and one that's damned enjoyable.

IN SUMMARY

While not the better game compared to Sega's updated *Panzer Dragoon* port, this certainly had more put into it and therefore comes across as better value for money.

RATING **82%**



» Battling some bloody tough mechanical spiders in a neon basement – this game just keeps getting weirder.



OPINION

What strikes me is that this is still one of the best 3D scrolling fighters ever made. The action is fast and furious but there's also a surprising layer of depth, if you can work out how the moves string together. With trash like *Final Fight Streetwise* and *Beatdown* on the PS2, this really is the only option for fans of the genre.

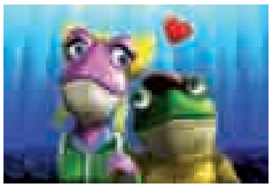
Ashley Day



» EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED

STARFOX COMAND

OF THE CLAN MCCLOUD



- » **SYSTEM:** NDS
- » **PRICE:** $39.99
- » **RELEASED:** JAPAN/USA OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** Q-GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-6



Expectation is a dangerous thing. It can destroy a game upon release. Sometimes it can be impossible to get over the inital shock of a title not delivering what we had been prepared for.

I had been expecting, along with no doubt every other Fox McCloud fan, a return to the series' roots. This is after all what Nintendo has been promising, a return to the ways of *Starwing* and *Lylat Wars*. Unfortunately, bar the obvious character IP, *Starfox Command* has little in common with its predecessors (though the strategy sections resemble the unreleased *Starfox 2*)

There isn't the traditional succession of on-rails stages. Instead the game is divided into an initial strategic map-screen, where you take turns navigating your pilots towards enemies while protecting a carrier ship. Some will undoubtedly be ecstatic with these sections, which add something new to the formula, but it's dangerous to mix such disparate genres (shoot-'em-up and strategy) and they're very annoying if you simply want to enjoy traditional blasting.

Navigating your ship into the enemy (assuming you haven't forgotten to protect the frustratingly vulnerable carrier) finally initiates the combat. Sadly it lacks the variety and depth seen in the first two released titles. Instead you find yourself simply flying around a giant arena, taking out specific targets – this sounds like a straightforward task, but it's not easy thanks to the poor radar and cumbersome controls.

Ah yes, those damned stylus controls. It was a foolish decision to arbitrarily force players to (only) use the stylus, for no other reason than because it exists. It's sluggish, imprecise, and throughout I was yearning for regular D-pad control. The DS is uncomfortable to hold for long periods of frenetic blasting, and since the stylus controls all movements plus bombs (which are mostly useless), you soon find your poor fingers cramping up. Furthermore there's no real-time co-operation between pilots; each one flies to their separate sections and is controlled independently.

It's not bad, but it's not great, or what I was hoping for, and it lacks an understanding of what *Starfox* is about. Fun in short bursts, especially the Wi-Fi multi-player, but marred by many niggles and by the gameplay being far too limited.



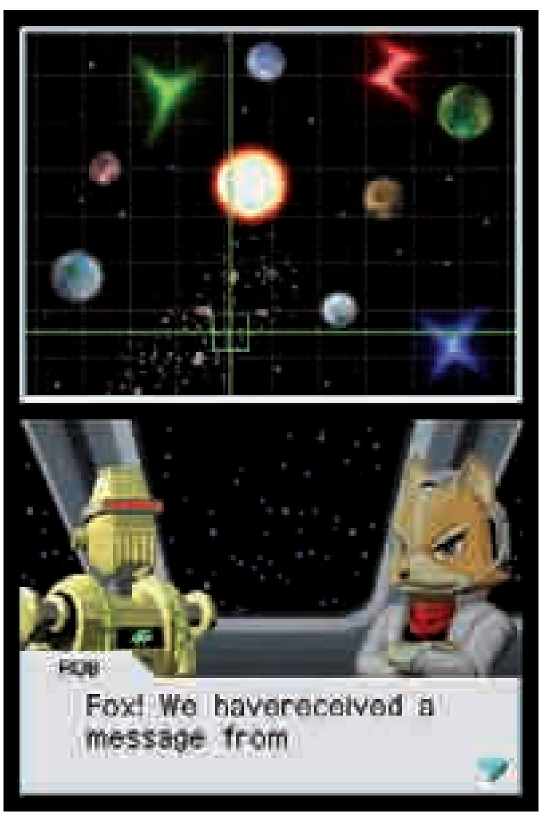
OPINION

Thank god for second opinions eh? While John is perfectly correct about *Starfox Command*'s dull-as-ditchwater arena sections, I've found the actual control to be pretty precise and accurate (although it's no substitute for an actual D-Pad). The strategy sections also add an interesting – but by no means amazing – new facet to the gameplay and, as has been pointed out, this is miles better than recent GameCube efforts.

Darran Jones



» Adding time limits was a bad idea. It's tough to find target enemies, and you will run out of time and die often.



» Mini cinemas with garbled speech advance the story. Brilliantly, you can record your own voice for these!



IN SUMMARY

Undeniably the best *Starfox* game since the N64 installment, but not a classic and not as good as we were hoping for.

RATING **75%**



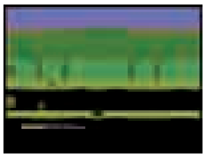
OPINION

Yes it's got some nice touches to it and it's obviously *Starfox* in looks if not actual gameplay, but why on earth didn't Nintendo simply tell Q Games to give us a jazzed up version of the superb N64 game? To many, *Starfox* will always be an on-rails shooter and while Nintendo should be applauded for trying something new, you can't help but wonder how good *Starfox Command* would have been if it had stuck to the more traditional formula.

Simon Phillips

PITFALL II: LOST CAVERNS

JUNGLE BOOGIE



- » **PUBLISHER:** ACTIVISION
- » **RELEASED:** 1984
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI 2600
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** FIVE ENGLISH POUNDS

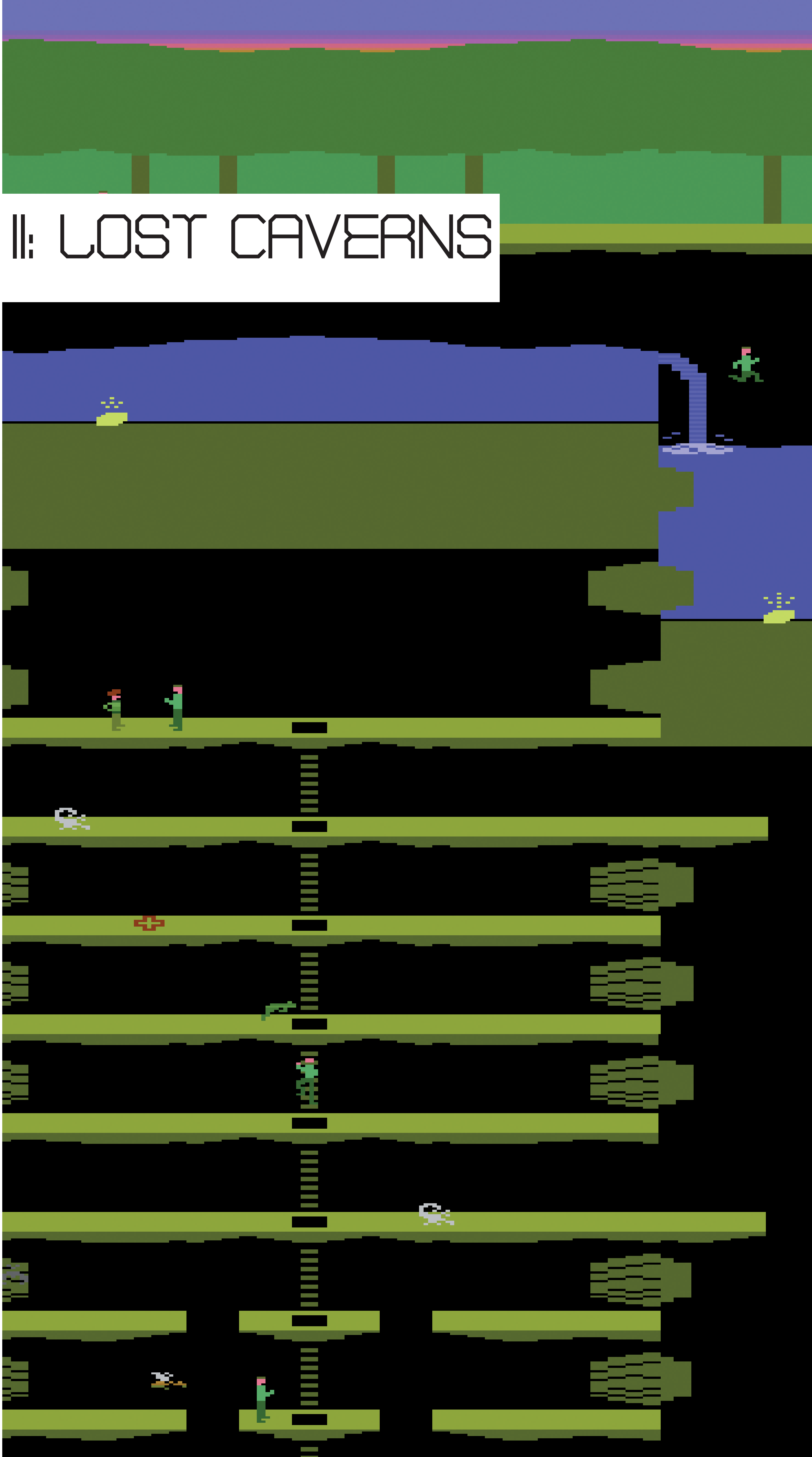


HISTORY

I love *Pitfall II*, but it wasn't always that way. I first fumbled around with the Sinclair Spectrum version, which, to my frustration, was ugly and unsatisfying. The experience was over in minutes and I wanted my money back. Nearly 20 years later, when researching an emulation feature for this very magazine, I finally had the chance to play around with David Crane's original Atari 2600 version. And I immediately fell under its spell. My opinion of the game, horribly tainted by the god-awful Spectrum version, changed in an instant, and I spent a good few hours making up for lost time.

Everything that's great about *Pitfall II* just so happens to be featured in this big ol' screenshot, from the dense jungle where the game begins (evoking fond memories of Harry's first, less excellent adventure), through the scorpions and other subterranean nasties that must be dodged with split-second timing, the underground lake complete with a waterfall which plunges our hero into a pool of deadly electric eels, the daring vertical balloon ride up a bat-infested cavern, to the reunion with Harry's stranded niece Rhonda. Best of all, you can only see a small section of the game here; *Pitfall II* is huge, with a maze of passages to explore and many treasures to discover.

The game was ported to a number of more powerful machines – the Spectrum version easily the worst, the Atari 5200 version probably the best – but the original comes out on top as it pushes the primitive 2600 hardware way beyond its limits, creating a vast game-world on a machine designed for playing *Pong*. It's a true showcase title and one that still plays surprisingly well to this day. Ironically, the main quirk for modern gamers is the innovative respawn system – which broke new ground by dispensing with the traditional lives counter – but having to watch a ghostly Harry drift back to the last checkpoint quickly wears thin. Thankfully, it's not enough to take the shine off this superbly polished title. With *Pitfall II* Crane successfully tamed the 2600, and in doing so shamed the competition.





BARGAIN HUNT

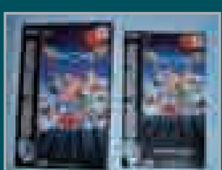
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

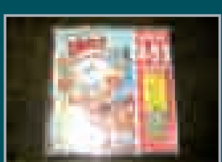
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

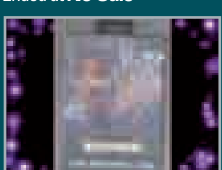
PARODIUS
SATURN
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£29.51**



TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY
AMIGA
Normally sells for **£3+**
Ended at **10.01**



STRIDER
MEGA DRIVE
Normally sells for **£2+**
Ended at **No Sale**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**

Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**

Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**

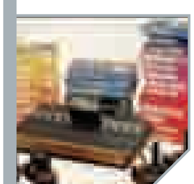
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**

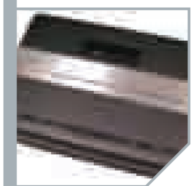
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- HEN'S TEETH
- LUCKY FIND
- EBAY REGULAR
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



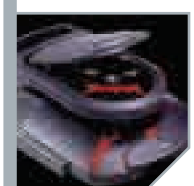
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

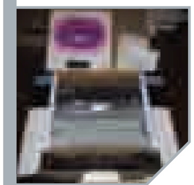


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

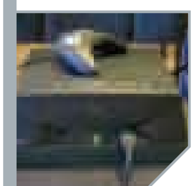
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



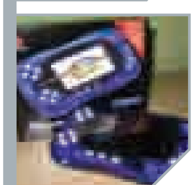
PIPPIN(ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



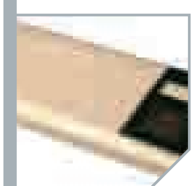
AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

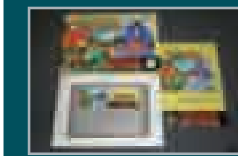


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.



CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

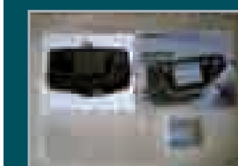
SUPER MARIO WORLD 2: YOSHI'S ISLAND
SNES
Normally sells for **£20+**
Ended at **£43.01**



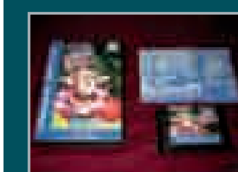
NEO GEO POCKET COLOR
CONSOLE + PAC-MAN
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£15.95**



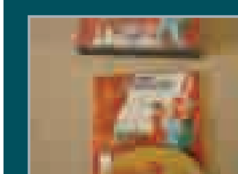
GAME GEAR
CONSOLE + COLUMNS
Normally sells for **£15+**
Ended at **£8.25**



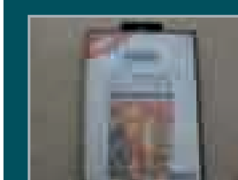
DAZE BEFORE CHRISTMAS
MEGA DRIVE
Normally sells for **£35**
Ended at **£13**



FINAL FIGHT CD
MEGA CD
Normally Sells for **£17+**
Ended at **£6.66**



CALIFORNIA GAMES
MASTER SYSTEM
Normally Sells for **£3+**
Ended at **£11.50**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32

» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.

- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20

» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established Commodore brand.

- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU



FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



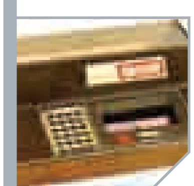
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!

- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE

» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.

- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



BARCODE BATTLER

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…

–Cocal Cola with Lime 500ml
– gamesTM issue 39
– Orange Tic Tacs



CASIO LOOPY

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

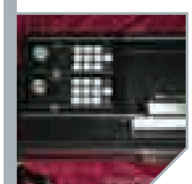
More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.



FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F

» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).

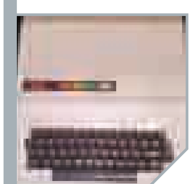


COLECOVISION

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.

-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS

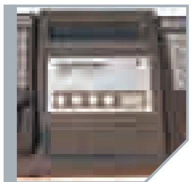


DRAGON 32/64

» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.

- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.

- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION

» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION

» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.

- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY

» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



PLAYSTATION

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.

- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPE

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.

- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



SUPERVISION

» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.

- ALIEN
- HONEY BEE
- POLICE BUST



TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM

» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.

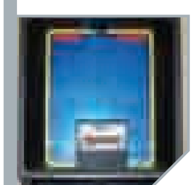
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)

» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Series of old computers by Tomy.

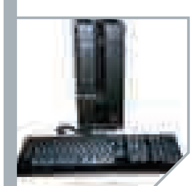


VECTREX (MB/GCE)

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.

- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**

Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.

- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

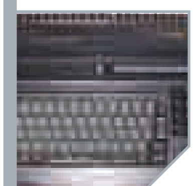
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER

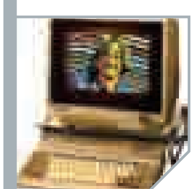


MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

NEC



PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of very cool Japanese games for it. Released in the USA as the NEC Trek. While fairly cheap, be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



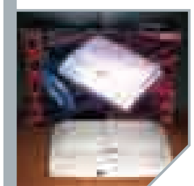
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICLONE
» YEAR **N/A**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Mass-produced pirate versions of the Famicom system. Virtually infinite different designs.
- CRISIS FORCE
- SWEET HOME
- HAUNG DI



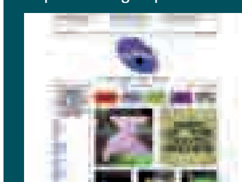
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

RETRO GAMING SITES

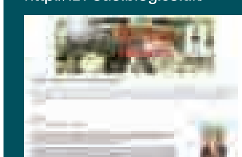
DREAMCAST HISTORY
Any site that sells a *Space Chanel 5* lunchbox featuring Ulala on the front is going to catch our attention. Not only does Dreamcast History feature an entertaining forum, it also boasts plenty of rare prototype games to drool over. Dreamcast worshippers will love it. http://www.dreamcasthistory.com



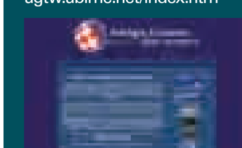
THE VIDEO GAME ATLAS
If you've found yourself stuck in a game, with no possible way to move on then you may want to check out the Video Game Atlas. It contains a staggering array of maps over a wide range of consoles and computers and will prove a godsend to those not wanting to resort to gamefaqs. http://www.vgmaps.com/

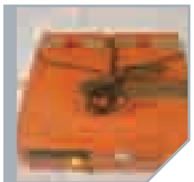


3DO KID
After helping out with last month's 3DO feature, it would have been rude not to plug this great site. Whilst still a long way from reviewing ever 3DO game this is a superb resource for anyone with even a passing interest in the doomed console: http://fz1-3do.blog.co.uk/



AMIGA GAMES THAT WEREN'T
Amiga Games That Weren't intents to catalogue every Amiga game that wasn't. There's not that many games on offer at the moment, but this will all change: http://agtw.abime.net/index.htm





SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



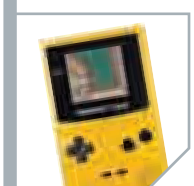
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SIN & PUNISHMENT
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- VICE: PROJECT DOOM
- SNAKE'S REVENGE
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



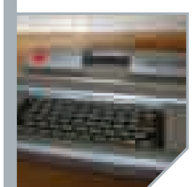
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



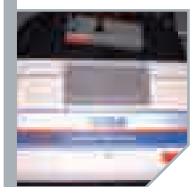
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- IKARUGA
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- NINJA GAIDEN



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR



ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



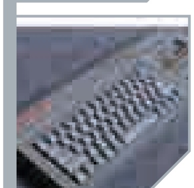
ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



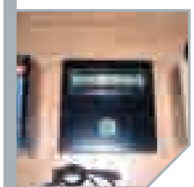
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK

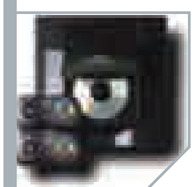


NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS ##
- WAKU WAKU 7



NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

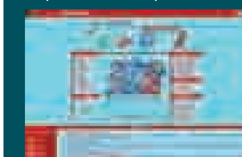


NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

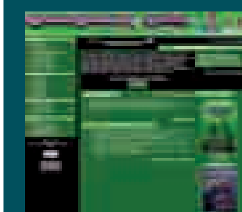
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

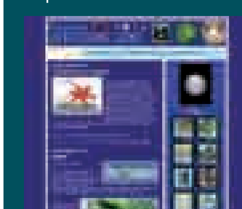
THE MEGA MAN HOMEPAGE
If you're a fan of Capcom's mascot you may want to check out this excellent little website, as it features an astonishing amount of information about the little blue hero. Every single game is covered, the different types of *Mega Man* games are fully explained and the site itself is extremely simple to navigate. http://www.mmhp.net/



RETRO GAMING RADIO
If you've been missing Shane's column, then just let us remind you that he's alive and well and still recording his monthly radio show. Not only does the show give a fascinating insight into retro gaming on the other side of the pond, but it's also supported by a very friendly forum. http://retrogamingradio.com/



PLANET ROME.RO
If you want an insight into *Doom* co-creator John Romero then your best course of action is to head on over to his very own part of the web. Always topical and full of interesting information, this is a must for fans of Romero's work. http://www.rome.ro



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER!

FEELING THE BLUS



Hi Retro Gamer,
During a typically productive day at work I was passing the time listlessly making 'things' out of Blu Tack. Before I knew what had happened I found myself transfixed within the Blu Tack sculptor's art, painstakingly recreating the level one boss from *R-Type*. Half an hour or so later and he was born....

Since then I have been battling to keep him from being used to stick something to something else. He is currently cowering in my desk draw, hardly living up to the menace of his pixelated counterpart.

Gareth Ladd, via email

What an amazing piece of work Gareth; it's easily the greatest Blu Tack creation we've ever seen. In fact, so inspired were we, we're currently building a life-size model of Nintendo god Shigeru Miyamoto. Once it's completed we'll stick it in the mag for all to admire. In the meantime enjoy your T-Shirt and Sega Plug 'N Play pack; you've earned it.

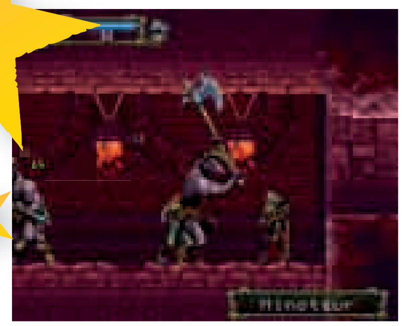
SYMPHONY OF PAIN

Dear Retro Gamer,
First of all, I absolutely adore the mag. I'm a mad keen retro fan, and you just keep reminding me of some of those old forgotten classics that I need to play again! Right, now what can you suggest to help a complete idiot? I still remember the day a few years ago when I owned a limited edition version of *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* for the original PlayStation, complete with the music CD and Art booklet.

Being a student at the time and in dire need of money, I took this game with the rest of my PSOne collection to a well-known game shop, where I was offered £10 for *Symphony Of The Night*. "£10 for an old PSOne game? BARGAIN!" But I have now been crying in my milk for four years after finding it sells on eBay for over £70!

What can I do to get over this bout of insanity? Please help me retro gamer!

Tom J, via email



» Poor Tom, he sold one of the greatest platformers ever, and now regrets it. We've all been there mate

Ah Tom, we pity your situation, as it's one we've often found ourselves in over the years. Darran still rues the day when he traded in a Japanese Super Famicom and 50 odd games for an Amiga 1200, only for Commodore to go bust a few months later. John on the other hand is still deciding whether he should sell his mint Panzer Dragoon Saga *on* eBay, *while all Luke wants to do is play the latest Pro Evo. Our advice is to keep hold of your games and simply sell any relations who have since outlived their purpose.*



» Konami's excellent platformer still goes for crazy prices on eBay. Sell yours now before the Xbox Live Arcade version comes out



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-Shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

www.slikstik.com

A C64 FAN SPEAKS OUT

Dear Retro Gamer,
First I would like to thank you for a great magazine. I am a regular buyer, and being an Eighties teenager, it brings back many good memories for me.

I do have some valid complaints though – mainly that there is far too much focus on the ZX Spectrum. When multiformat games are covered there are far more Spectrum screenshots than C64, and in effect you are suggesting that the machine is more popular, when in fact the most sold worldwide was the C64 – this should also be reflected in your articles – not like now, where there is 50% Spectrum and 20% Commodore. It's not just screenshots, the same thing happens in the actual articles



» If you're the sort of reader who thinks the C64 was the best 8-bit machine ever you may not want to miss the next issue…





themselves. Take the *Target Renegade* article for example (or any Ocean title for that matter). You did not comment on the Commodore 64 versions, which was superior to the Spectrum versions. In the Ocean feature you did not give Dave Collier any mention at all – and he was Oceans lead Commodore 64 programmer. *Yie Ar Kung Fu*, *Green Beret*, *Arkanoid*, *Combat School*, *Target Renegade* and *Terra Cresta* were all created by Collier and all perfectly programmed on the C64. Add In some superb soundtracks by Martin Galway, and there was no comparison – the C64 versions were miles better. How could you forget to mention such an important fact?

So why do you insist on raving about the Spectrum versions and ignoring the others? Is this a UK thing because the Spectrum was built there? It must be, because the C64 had the most software and it was super popular all over the world – much more than the Spectrum ever was. So please adjust your content to be more balanced and check the facts better in the future (as some people tend to believe everything they read).

Yours,

Håvar B Hojem (35), Norway

Well, Håvar you are upset aren't you. We will endeavour to make sure that more C64 screens appear in the future, but to say we spend all our articles talking about the Spectrum is a little unfair. Both Samurai Warrior and Lazy Jones appear in this issue, while Issue 30 will have masses of C64 action including, amongst other things, a long overdue Retroinspection. In fact, we wouldn't be at all surprised if all the Amstrad and BBC owners start complaining next.



» Look: it's *The Last Ninja*, arguably one of the finest trilogy of games to ever appear on the Commodore 64

GIRL TROUBLES

Dear Retro Gamer,

I have been a subscriber since Issue 2, and I very much look forward to receiving the issue each month, however my subscription is coming up and I am facing a battle with my girlfriend. Unfortunately every time your

FROM THE FORUM

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE GAME THAT NEVER RECEIVED A SEQUEL? HERE'S A FEW REPLIES.

ID: DonkeySpank

Bruce Lee! The original is a great game but it practically screams out for another outing with the added bells and whistles – more enemies, craftier level designs, trickier puzzles, a wider range of skills for Bruce to master, end of level bosses/guardians, the list goes on! After 20 years I'm still waiting for a sequel – c'mon Bruce, pick up your bloodied numchucks and take that Green Yamo to school!! HiiiiiYAH!!

ID: Duddyroar

ESWAT. I always thought Sega failed to take the concept far enough with that game. I suppose the arcade, Mega Drive and Master System versions all being completely different means there's actually three games in the series... but still!

ID: oli_lar

While not retro, *Total Annihilation* was a groundbreaking game that I would have loved to see a sequel of, with it set in the same universe.

ID: Smurph

I'd have eaten my own foot to get a sequel to *Unirally* for the SNES – it wouldn't have needed any innovation because it was pure gameplay in the first place – just a load more tracks and a four-player mode.

ID: backdrifter

All these posts and no one's said *NiGHTS*?

Now that's an incredible game. You can count on the fingers of one hand how many weeks I haven't played this little gem.

ID: forestville

A sequel to *The Sacred Armour of Antiriad* would have been cool. It could have featured at the start flying out of the volcano and going on to other worlds, and the *Antiriad* armour could get upgrades including new weapons and faster than light space travel.

ID: Sabreman

Vagrant Story. I live with the sad knowledge that it's highly unlikely.

ID: Kickboxingshrimp

Fifa International Soccer… oh hang on…

ID: Mort

3d Deathchase, now there is a game, which would be great updated officially, with more enemies, more trees or different items to avoid – sheer bliss.

ID: paranoid marvin

New Zealand Story – for such a popular game with such a popular main character, I can't believe there wasn't a sequel.

ID: ajgreen

Turbo Esprit 2 would have been fantastic – more and larger cities to explore, different cars to drive, more tasks. It could have been more free form too.

ID: Tapey297

Konami's superb *Zombies Ate My Neighbours*. Many a happy hour was spent blasting zombies, martians and chucky dolls. Also the level titles were brilliant: Lumberjack Hedgemaze Mayhem anyone?

ID: Cloud Atlus

Stunt Race FX. The greatest racer that pushed its host hardware to the limits resulting in a series of niggly performance issues that could have been amended with a sequel on a more powerful console. Stick the original on DS for starters. I mean, c'mon, Nintendo!

ID: Dimrill

Hill Street Blues on the Amiga. Fantastic endless game that sucked many an afternoon of my life away.

ID: StarEye

Moonstone. It just begged for a sequel, with more of everything. Bigger map, more enemies, more players, co-op, more weapons and equipment, more horrible ways to die, and, last but not least, more moves.

THE RETRO FORUM



» He so wanted to put an image of *Strider* here, but after numerous death threats Darran decided to stick with an image of *Gunstar Heroes* instead



» Cor, it feels like only yesterday when we were playing *Thundering Turbos*. Actually, it was only yesterday. Working on Retro Gamer rules

magazine comes out, I end up seeing games I had fancied playing or buying in the past and have gone on an eBay-shopping spree! Worse came with your latest issue and the Mega Drive issue – my poor girlfriend was having to answer the door to the postman who was delivering up to three parcels a day! Once I had hit 35 games, she had had enough and has put a ban on no more retro delights or Internet shopping. I fear she is going to stop me subscribing next in order to curb my enthusiasm. Please print this letter and help me. Retro gaming must never die!

Many thanks,

Ben Robinson, via email

Never fear Ben, we're here to help. We always find that the best way to assuage your better half is to treat her to something nice. It's a sure way to keep your retro goodness. They are normally so racked with guilt, she'll be bound to let you buy a few treats for yourself. Failing that, just give her a bloody good massage – you can give good massages right?

GRANDSTAND FAN

Dear Retro Gamer,

First let me thank you for bringing this excellent magazine back to us, and for doing a brilliant job of it. It really is the best magazine on the market in my humble opinion.

Now, I'm contacting you to beg for a feature on the superb LCD game company Grandstand, the geniuses behind classics such as *Astro Wars*, *BMX Flyer*, *Munchman* and *Caveman* to name but a few. Before I got my Spectrum in 1986 these brilliant, very playable little games were all I had to give me my game fix.

Now, I realize that if you do a feature on Grandstand people may start demanding features on other LCD companies, and it may lead to ridiculous demands for a feature on the *Pac-Man* board game, but Grandstand influenced a generation and their great very playable games were like mini arcade machines in your bedroom. So please don't ignore this very retro and classic piece of videogaming history.

Regards

Crispian Driver, via email

It's funny you should mention this Crispian, as a freelancer has just pitched this very feature to us. We'll do our best to make sure that it appears in the magazine as quickly as is humanly possible.



» Crispian Driver wants to see a dedicated Grandstand feature. time to get in contact with the freelancers…

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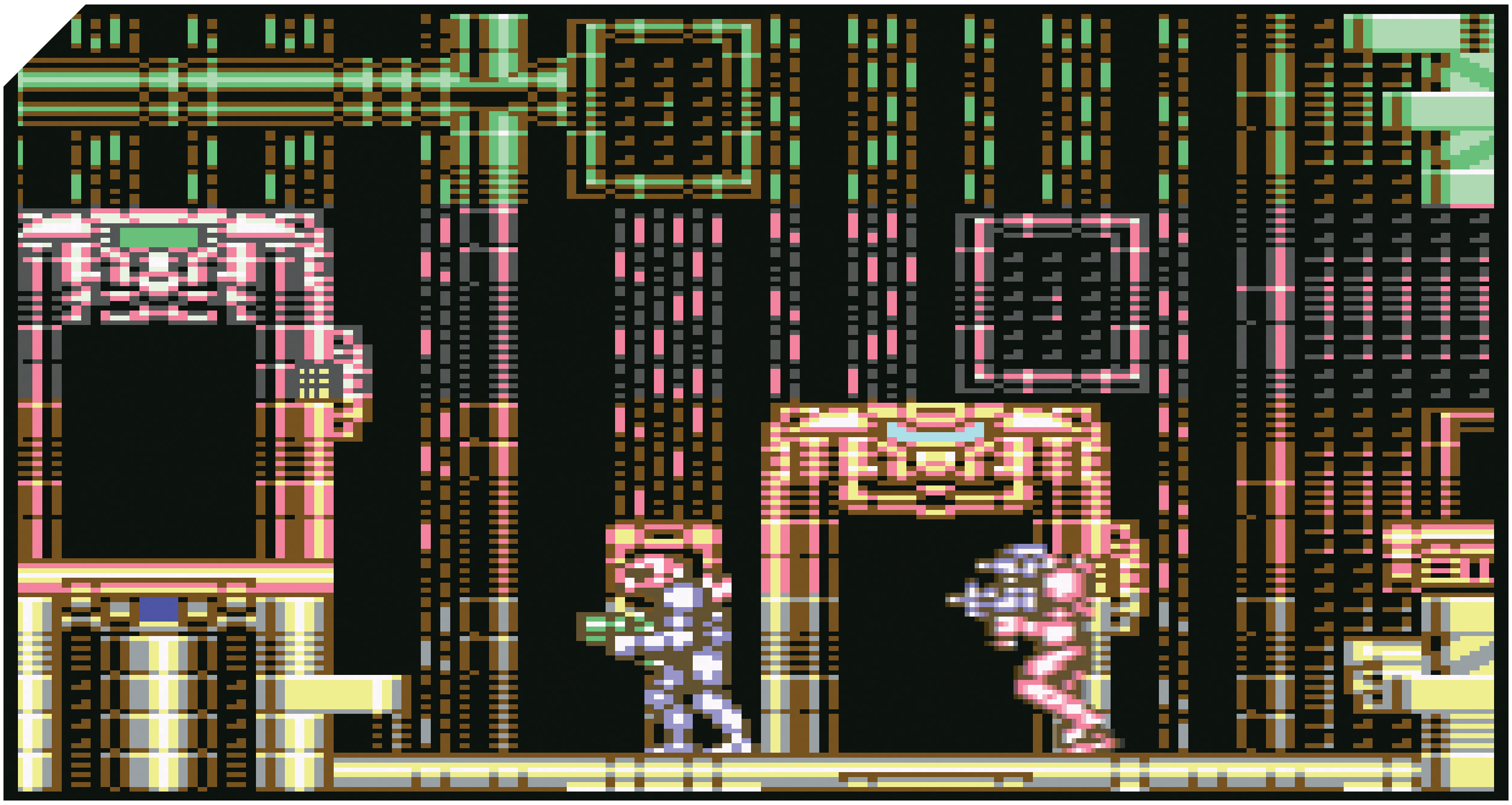
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RETRO SCENE

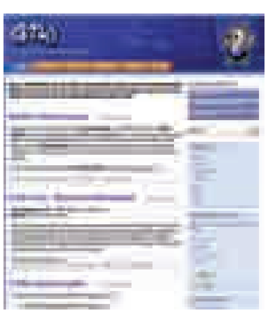
THERE'S FAR TOO MUCH TO COVER THIS MONTH, BUT WE DO FIND TIME TO CHAT WITH FRANK GASKING AND CHECK OUT WHAT'S HOT ON THE INDIE SCENE.



» *Deadlock* on the C64 was one of the more high profile discoveries by the original GTW crew.

NEW GTW PORTAL SITE OPENS UP, AND CALLS FOR ALLIES.

GAMES THAT WEREN'T



» The front page features news, articles, polls, plus links to their forum, GTW affiliates, and other related sites.

Retro Gamer contributor, seeker of unreleased games, and all round nice guy Frank Gasking has started a new Games That Weren't portal site which intends to report on and feature articles regarding unreleased games across multiple formats. As Gasking tells us, "Games That Weren't has been developed to report on unreleased games news from all over the Internet, publicising other unreleased game sites and pushing to get GTW sister sites set up for specific platforms. Our aim is simply to help preserve and find as many lost/unreleased/incomplete games as possible."

Currently they are affiliated with GTW sites dedicated to the C64, Amiga and PC. But they intend to rapidly broaden this coverage by having as many allies as possible. "The main GTW site aims to bridge the gap in many ways, but also try to encourage others to join us and set up others for their supported machines. At the moment the portal just has three sister links, because only two additional people have come up and offered to start up a site. We really want to increase that list!"

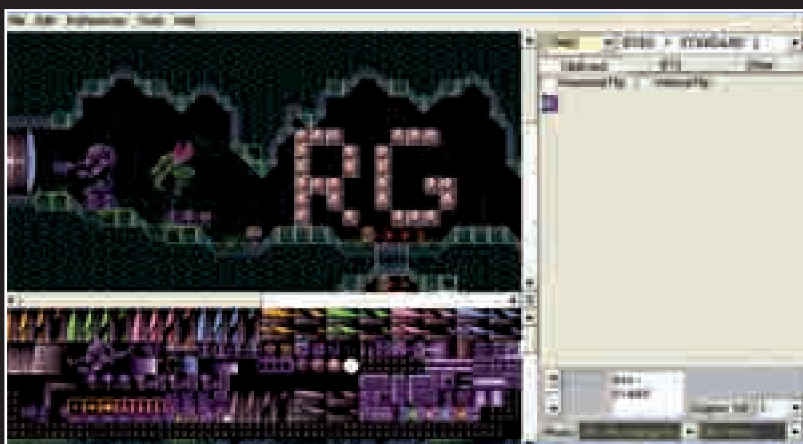
This current focus on home computers makes it an excellent UK-centric alternative to more console-oriented unreleased game sites, like LostLevels.org. But we're assured that there is no rivalry between any of the bigger sites. "I'm a big fan of anything to do with unreleased games, and I'm very supportive of other sites. We have an Unreleased Games Links Resource on the main page, which links to all of these external sites. If any of them find a particular lost title, we're very happy to report on it and provide a link to their website," explains Gasking.

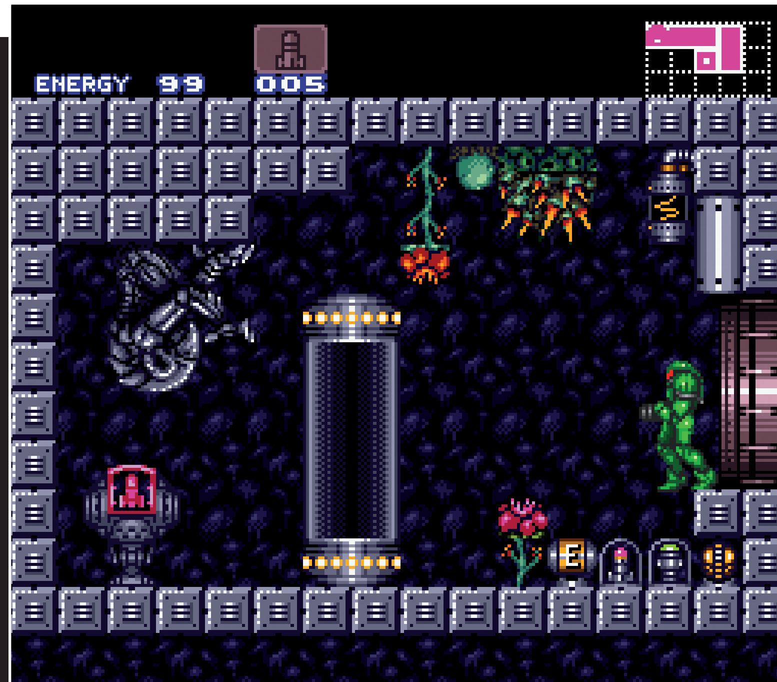
We asked him what plans there are for the future; his ambitions are high but for such a grand goal GTW requires the support of others. "We're hoping to create a large community of support which will help us build and share knowledge, while finding titles. We would also love others to join us and set up other sister GTW sites - hopefully with the C64, Amiga and PC sites providing evidence that the project can actually work with regards to finding lost titles."

They've certainly had success over the years, with the most recent discoveries being PC and GBC demos of *Mayhem In Monsterland*, as well as a *Mercenary* wireframe demo on GBC. Entries all feature high quality screengrabs, and in most cases downloadable videos too. The site is set to become a growing and valuable resource for all unreleased games, and Retro Gamer is in full support of the venture. We also encourage larger companies to support them, since it seems odd that the preserving of history is left to independent groups and individuals, without much (if any) official help. Sites such as GTW are providing a service for the industry and they deserve both assistance and respect for their valiant efforts. Pledge your support today and visit www.gamesthatwerent.com.

SMILE PLEASE!

CREATE YOUR OWN SUPER METROID WORLDS WITH EASE





Over a decade after its release, almost like the mapping of the human genome, every pixel contained within *Super Metroid* is now fully documented. A highly skilled programmer and hacker by the name of Jathys (along with a fully credited team of over 20 others) has created what every Nintendo fan has yearned for: a fully comprehensive editor, named SMILE (*Super Metroid* Integrated Level Editor).

This follows hot on the trail of Issue 26's reporting of Drewseph's *Super Metroid Redesign*. SMILE now offers everyone the chance to create their own variations by altering the code of an original *Super Metroid* ROM. Almost everything can be edited: levels, enemies, items, colour palettes, text, individual room's gravity; you can even have Torizo statues come to life after collecting items. It's easy to use as there's no programming involved – everything is point-and-click based, though navigating the complex menus and keeping track of things proves daunting.

While we anticipate a flurry of poor efforts, as experience develops there's the potential for some fantastic remakes; the best of these will, of course, be covered by Retro Gamer. Find out more at p://drewseph.zophar.net.

» **Left:** It's even possible to create Retro Gamer themed levels. Perhaps SMILE requires a one-off feature? **Right:** Now anyone can create the fabled *Super Metroid 2*. Let your imagination run wild!

THE HILLS ARE ALIVE WITH INDIES

HIGHLY SKILLED INDEPENDENT FREEWARE DEVELOPERS PREFER A RETRO STYLE OF DESIGN.

Home development tool Game Maker has been increasing in popularity, just as the skill level of users continues to get more impressive. Despite there being plenty of tools and editors available to create modern-styled 3D games relatively easily, especially first-person shooters which come with intuitive level editors, many people are opting to design and create retro-inspired games instead.

And it's not just two dimensional titles; games with limited colour palettes, resolutions, and modes of control are all encouraging budding designers to think outside the box and create uniqque gameplay experiences. Such works are proving not only playable but highly popular among indie gamers – ironic considering the handheld market, a traditional bastion of simplified games, is constantly trying to evolve and become ever more complex. Arousing our interest this month are two monochrome Game Boy inspired games: *Hyper Wars: The Mega Firestorm*, a vertical shoot-'em-up with 33% complete PC demo available, and *Organic Units* (nearly finished), featuring flesh-based machines and simple puzzle-based rooms to navigate.

Beyond Game Maker titles, there are plenty of other notable, independent, retro-themed projects being hard coded. Interesting us most is *Dot Fighters* by Takase, an adorable super-low-resolution beat-'em-up appearing to be equivalent to *Street Fighter* running on an Intellivision; only screens and videos are currently available, but it's progressing nicely.

When such indie games reach completion, Retro Gamer will be on hand to cover those worth downloading. On pages 84-85 you'll also find a round-up of retro-themed indie titles which have already been completed. Long live indie developers!



» "Look at those highly pixelised little fighters. Doesn't it bring a nostalgic retro tear to your eye?"

RETRO SCENE

THIS MONTH WE REVIEW A BRAND NEW SPECTRUM COMPILATION AND LOOK AT SOME CLASSIC REMAKES

SINCLAIR SPECTRUM ALLSTARS VOLUME 1

A LAZY ATTEMPT TO PROFIT FROM NOSTALGIA

- » **FORMAT:** PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** ALTEN8
- » **LINK:** WWW.ALTEN8.COM
- » **PRICE:** £4.99
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK



» They just don't name games like they used to. The entire office crowded around to see what *Mole On The Dole* was about.

The ZX Spectrum is apparently the most emulated computer in the world, so therefore creating a retro compilation of emulated Speccy games should be easy and the final package should be intuitive and free from hassle. Why then is *Spectrum Allstars* such an appalling compilation? In fact it's one of the worst we've played, right up there with Namco's cynical annual rehashes.

The problem is not the licensed games – there are a few genuine classics such as *3D Ant Attack* and *Mooncresta* among the 50 available titles. The severe and unforgivable flaw is that the front end and user interface is dreadful. Each time we tried to access the pad configuration menu the program crashed, leaving us at the whim of the default settings. As a result few games worked with a USB pad. Those that did had to already have Joystick support, otherwise it was keyboard only. Any game or emulator compilation which forces us to load up our "Joy To Key" utility (check Google) is going to lose marks.

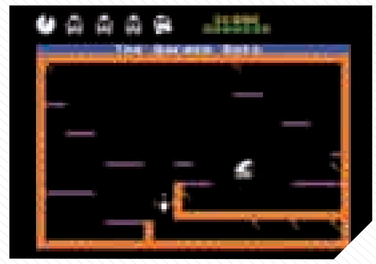
There is no excuse for not adding simple and intuitive USB pad support, for every single game. This isn't a free downloadable Speccy emulator that has to be a catch-all for every single piece of software out there – they could have easily customised this specifically to the titles available. In fact the UI quality is far lower than many of the free Spectrum emulators available to download – clearly the compilation was made on the cheap with little effort or thought being applied to the end customer.

The games are great, and after much fiddling it was tremendous fun playing those which worked, but this is poorly put together and is a pain to use. We honestly can't recommend it, since it's likely only to ruin what precious retro memories you may have of these titles. Good price though!

RATING: 58%



» Ahh, the classic Ant Attack. It's still an amazing game



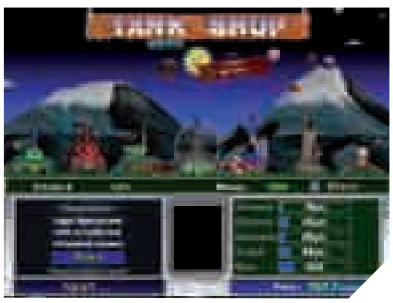
» *Egg Head*, a rather nifty platformer that's a joy to play

SPACE TANKS

TANKS OF WAR – NOT AS GOOD AS TANKARDS OF ALE

- » **FORMAT:** PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** ALTEN8
- » **LINK:** WWW.ALTEN8.COM
- » **PRICE:** £4.99
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK





» There is simply far too much choice involved for this to be as fun as it should be. Who the hell needs 70 tanks to choose from?!

Can there be too much of a good thing? In the case of *Space Tanks* the answer is a resounding yes. For while YawThrust Software Labs has incorporated plenty of extra features into what is essentially *Tanks*, it's diluted the game so much that it's not really any fun to play.

First you must buy one of 70 different tanks, all with different statistics and prices. Next you're placed on a planet in space, with your opponent on another planet, and all manner of debris and/or planets in-between, and they all have their own gravity which affects projectiles. Next are the weapons themselves, all 32 of them, ranging from (poorly) homing missiles to "fat grannies" – again, each has a varying set of statistics and effects.

When firing a weapon you need to take into account your position on the planet surface, the angle of trajectory, the power of the shot, the weapon itself, the gravitational field of all planetoids, the position of your enemy, and a whole multi-coloured galaxy of buttons and dials. None of the weapons are fully explained, and it requires a lot of trial and error to get the hang of.

The core problem is that there is simply too much to deal with. It's unintuitive and increasingly convoluted. The very act of trying to make it more appealing has ruined a lot of what would have originally encouraged people to spend money on it. Immense fun in two-player, but a lot more effort to play than it should be.

RATING: 69%



» There's a gluttonous amount of weapons available in *Space Tanks*, but will you be bothered to use them all?

Remake of the Month

TITAN ATTACKS!

IT'S SPACE INVADERS, JIM – BUT NOT AS WE KNOW IT



- **FORMAT:** WINDOWS, MAC, LINUX
- **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPED BY:** PUPPY GAMES
- **LINK:** WWW.PUPPYGAMES.NET
- **PRICE:** $9.95
- **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

Retro Gamer has to collectively admit we no longer enjoy the original *Space Invaders*. It's slow, clunky, and horribly limited regardless of what anyone says. Undeniably groundbreaking back in the day, but it's just not able to cut the proverbial Colman's any longer. So the thought of a *Space Invaders* remake chilled us to the core, but in a wonderful moment of irony (and humility), *Titan Attacks!* turned out to be one of the most played games in the office this month.

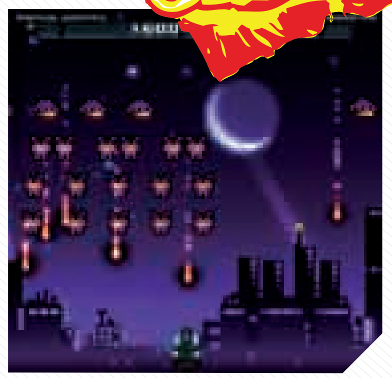
The premise is simple: move your ship left and right (only), while either firing at invaders until they've all been destroyed or using a Smart Bomb to wipe out everything in a tight situation. The game actually has more in common with Taito's later (slightly evolved) iterations of the classic series; *Titan Attacks!* features many exciting new additions. Every invader killed nets you money, with bonus pay acquired for performing special actions such as shooting down the flying saucer, or catching the tiny parachuting invaders which sometimes drift down. Conversely, allowing any invaders to escape results in a penalty and money lost. This money can be spent at the store between each level, where you can buy shields, extra gun power, extra shots, smart bombs, ship add-ons, and speed boosters.

As the levels progress your avatar can be teched out to be quite a formidable death machine, while the speed boosters ensure ultra-responsive controls at all times.

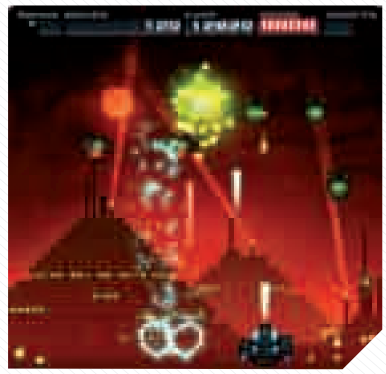
It contains unique enemies (evolutions of Taito's originals) and some really awesome bosses. The neon visuals are simple but have a beautiful style; backgrounds are pixelated, containing clever references like wireframe Asteroids falling from the sky. Along with these trippy visuals is some hypnotic music, giving proceedings an appropriate *Jeff Minter*-esque atmosphere.

They've invigorated the original formula, making it less clunky and far more responsive, so that it's now the perfect zone-out game. Indeed, *Titan Attacks!* is easily one of the best remakes we've recently played, because not only does it remind you of the original, but it implements a variety of new features without diluting or overdoing things (take note *Space Tanks*). But there's a catch: *Titan Attacks!* costs $9.95 (about a fiver) to unlock, once downloaded. Even so, it's worth it when considering what it gives you and the elegance of execution.

RATING **90%**



» Neon invaders against a luminescent night sky. Lovely

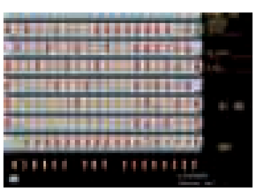


» Action intensifies later on, so stock up on bombs

PUSHOVER

MORE FUN THAN POURING ANTS INTO YOUR PANTS

- **FORMAT:** PC
- **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- **DEVELOPED BY:** ISHISOFT
- **LINK:** WWW.JRNETWORK.CO.UK/ISHISOFT/
- **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

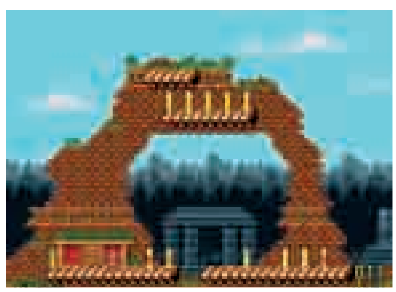


» This is an image of the level editor's initial screen. Now you too can create your own version of *Pushover*.

***Pushover* was a highly enjoyable little puzzler released in 1992 across multiple formats (notably the ST, Amiga and SNES).** But it wasn't perfect and received mixed scores, the big complaint being that as a puzzler the gameplay could get quite repetitive and people might begrudge paying full whack for it. Today though, thanks to the hard work of IshiSoft, an absolutely pixel-perfect remake is available for free.

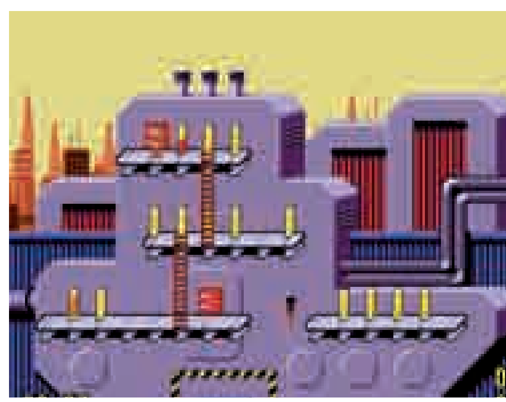
The user interface is slick, working first time with USB pads. Everything has been designed to be inviting and ergonomic. Gameplay is just as we remember it: you're an ant in various single-screen areas, picking up and rearranging blocks in order to push one over and create the perfect dominoes effect. Knock all blocks over and the exit opens – there are 100 levels. It sounds simple but, much like *Lemmings* and similar games, the action gets incredibly complicated incredibly fast.

The best bit though is that IshiSoft has devised five entirely new and original block types: Counter-Stoppers which need knocking over in order; Starters which must be used first; Rockets which blow holes in the floor above; Mimics which copy each others movements; and Antigrav which floats over holes. He's also included a level editor with the game and intends for a future release to include 100 new levels to take advantage of these block types. The updated version will be using levels submitted by the general public, so if you're a fan you best get those entries sent soon before all 100 have been decided. Even without the promise of an additional 100 levels to utilise five unique and entirely new block types (making it also something of a pseudo-sequel), this is a wonderful remake and one that is entirely free of charge. With most levels not requiring much time to complete, this is also the perfect office game to play when management isn't looking.



» Each main area has it's own unique theme. Here we see the start of the Aztec levels, where the difficulty ramps up.

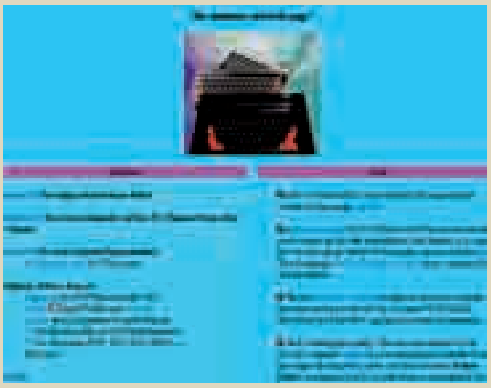
RATING **85%**



» Don't get flustered now, this is still just one of the earlier levels. Lots to go before reaching 100!

EMULATE THIS

TO TIE IN WITH THIS MONTH'S HARDWARE FEATURE WE PRESENT A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO USING EUPHORIC, THE ONLY DEDICATED ORIC EMULATOR AVAILABLE FOR THE PC. IT SUPPORTS THE ORIC-1, ATMOS AND TELESTRAT, AND ALSO RUNS EVERY GAME WE'VE THROWN AT IT, SO IT GETS A BIG THUMBS UP FROM US.



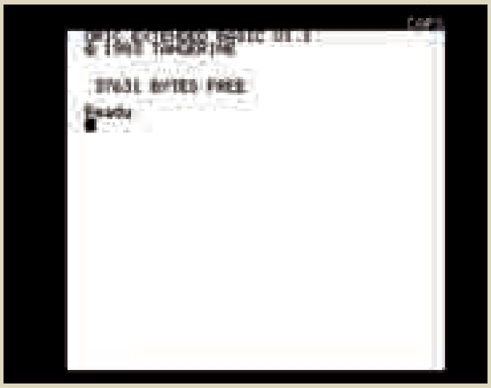
STEP ONE

Start by visiting http://oric.free.fr/emulator.html and downloading the DOS/Windows version of Euphoric. This guide is for the PC version, but you can also download Linux and Mac ports here. And for you hardcore retro-heads, there are also Oric emulators available for the Commodore Amiga, Atari ST and Acorn Archimedes! The DOS/Windows version is the final build– author Fabrice Francès is no longer developing it – so you can be sure it's the best Oric emulator available on the Web.



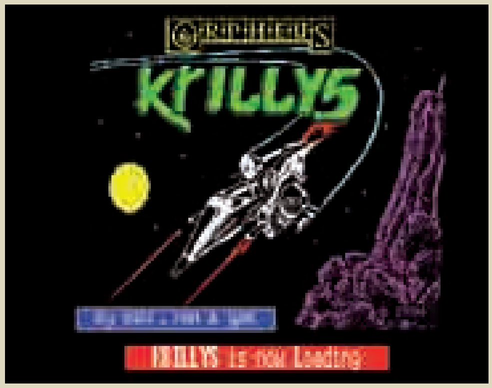
STEP 2

When the Euphoric archive has downloaded, unzip the contents straight onto your desktop. A new Euphoric folder will appear. Look inside and you'll see a folder called ROMS – all the Oric system files are stored here, so there's no need to go searching the Web for them. You will, however, need to download some software. Go to http://oric.org and browse the large software archive. To download files you must first register with the site – it only takes a few seconds.



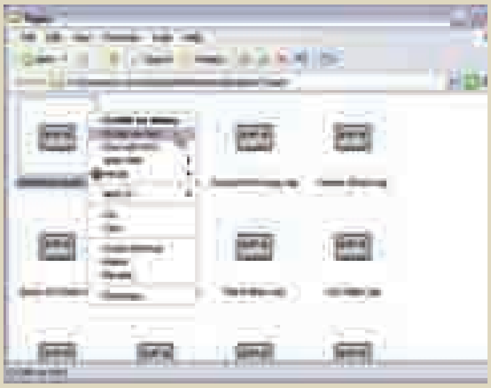
STEP 3

Although Euphoric works fine on all versions of Windows (including XP), it's very obviously an MS-DOS program, so don't expect a nice friendly menu-driven interface. Similarly, don't let the lack of one put you off. If you want to boot into Oric Extended BASIC, simply double click the euphoric.exe file. The emulator will open in full-screen mode (there's no windowed view). You'll notice that the Oric's keyboard is mapped to your PC's keyboard. To quit the emulator press F10.



STEP 4

Okay, so typing boring BASIC listings isn't much fun. The easiest way to start a game is to drag and drop a tape (.tap) or disk (.dsk) image onto the euphoric.exe file. When you do this, Euphoric will start up and the game will load automatically. This will run the game using the standard Oric configuration (an Oric Atmos, using BASIC version 1.1 with Microdisc support). Remember, you can close Euphoric and return to Windows at any time by pressing F10.



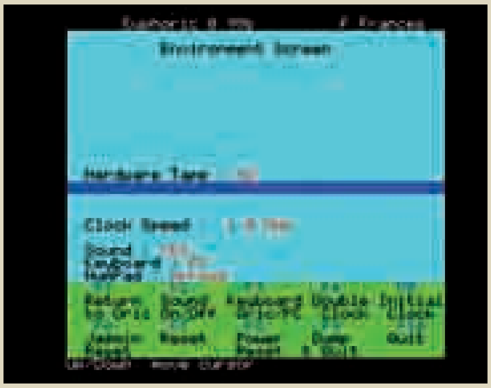
STEP 5

If you want more control over how you run software, you should double-click the setup.js file found in the Euphoric folder. This script installs handy shortcuts in the right-click context menu, and assigns the .tap and .dsk extensions to Euphoric. This means that you can run Oric software by double-clicking an image file or right-clicking and selecting Atmos of Oric-1. Note however that you may have already assigned other emulators to these common file extensions.



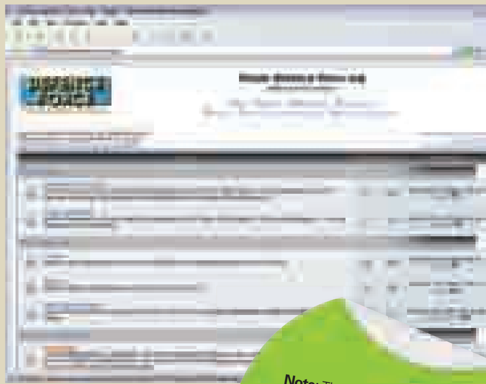
STEP 6

Okay, so one way or another, you've managed to get an Oric game up and running. Many games list the control keys when they begin, so playing games should be no problem using your PC keyboard. You'll find that a lot of arcade-style games can be controlled using the cursor keys with the space bar acting as the fire button. The PC function keys are used to control the emulator when it's running – press F1 to toggle the Environment Screen on and off.



STEP 7

From the Environment Screen you can select various options (use the cursor keys to move up and down and press Enter to modify a setting). This screen also lists the actions of all the function keys. Perhaps the most useful option when playing games is Double Clock (F4) – this will double the speed of the emulator. You can keep pressing F4 to increase the speed further. Press F5 to return to the Oric's default clock speed of 1MHz.



STEP 8

Euphoric is a powerful emulator with many advanced options – some of which you must run from the command line. For a full rundown of all the emulator's features refer to the manual.htm file found in the Euphoric folder. The emulator is freeware so please do not pester the author if you have a problem. Instead, we recommend you post a message over at the Defence Force forum (http://forum.defence-force.org) where there are lots of helpful Oric enthusiasts.

Note: The popular cross-platform MESS emulator includes support for the Oric machines. It's not as reliable or as faithful as Euphoric, but it's a decent alternative if you already use MESS to emulate other machines. You can download the latest version from www.mess.org.

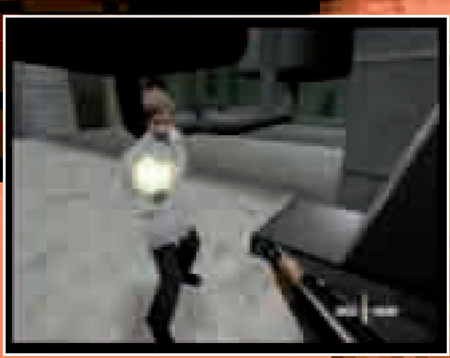
eMag

IT CAME FROM THE DESERT

Lots of giant ants, a classic B-Movie script and well… lots of giant ants. Retro Gamer grabs a bottle of pesticide and investigates one of Cinemaware's greatest triumphs.

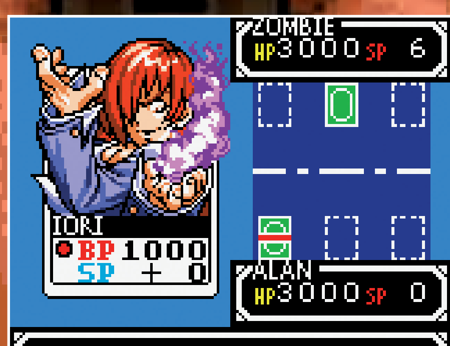
DESERT ISLAND DISKS

Steve Ellis may not be familiar to every gamer, but this gaming god single-handedly created *GoldenEye's* superb multiplayer mode. Nuff said!



WHY YOU MUST PLAY…

With a new version on the way for the Nintendo DS, Retro Gamer looks back at the original Neo Geo Pocket Color game and explains why it's so great.



THE DEFINITIVE…

After losing out last month to Taito's *Bub And Bob*, videogaming's most iconic gold digger finally gets a definitive feature of his very own.



retro GAMER THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

LOAD 30

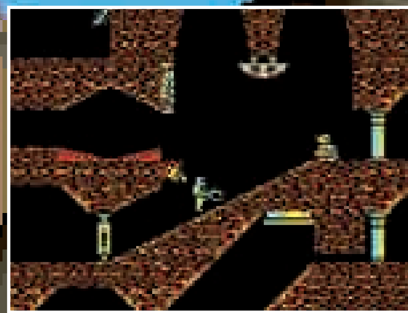
NEXT ISSUE

ON SALE 12 OCT 2006

NEXT MONTH

THE MAKING OF…

Exile is a bonafide classic that remains playable to this day. Co-creator Peter Irvin explains why.



RETROINSPECTION…

Was the Commodore 64 the greatest 8-bit machine ever made, or should you leave your rose-tinted spectacles at home?



COMPANY PROFILE…

The 8-bit Master System had huge success in Brazil and it was all thanks to Tec Toy, Sega's publisher and localisation department.



AND THE REST…

Retro Rated
Eastern Promise
Back To The Eighties
Classic Game
Retro Revival
And much, much more



NARC

Having just fought through the hellish city streets, taken out drug dealers and assorted freaks, plus blown up a narcotics lab, you are unleashed onto the man behind it all – Mr Big!











SCREEN 1
What the hell?! So this is the head of Mr Big International; a man whose face resembles a pack of hotdogs. Clearly a direct result of running a drugs operation is that you develop an addiction to donuts and can't stop gorging on them. Well, either that or it's glandular.

SCREEN 2
It's a tough fight, but our hero deftly manoeuvres around the final boss while pumping his bloated and grotesque jowls full of machine gun lead and explosive rockets. The arrogant smirk is soon wiped off his face, only to reveal a Terminator-esque skull underneath. Nice.

SCREEN 3
Ahh yes, this is more like it. After a hard day's killing there's no better reward than being showered with gold bullion worth $24000 a piece. It'll go some way to helping silence the screams of the depraved freaks recently killed, which our main hero is no doubt tormented by as he sleeps.

SCREEN 4
Adding up the total of the bonus money it turns out to be over a million dollars! Looks like our hero can retire, safe in the knowledge that his gambling debts are cleared and that his liquor cabinet will be forever well stocked. Not bad for a hard day's work blowing-the-crap-out-of-people.

SCREEN 5
What? Just a training mission?! What a way to make all the previous hard work feel like an absolute waste of time. Suddenly it dawns on our hero that he's not a millionaire at all and like everyone else will have to resign himself to a lifetime of menial labour. Guess where you can stick that D.E.A offer…